

FOR DIGITAL AND FILM PHOTOGRAPHERS

GROUP PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY HANDBOOK *2nd Ed.*

BILL HURTER



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PUBLISHER OF PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bill Hurter started out in photography in 1972 in Washington, DC, where he was a news photographer. He even covered the political scene—including the Watergate hearings. After graduating with a BA in literature from American University in 1972, he completed training at the Brooks Institute of Photography in 1975. Going on to work at *Petersen's PhotoGraphic* magazine, he held practically every job except art director. He has been the owner of his own creative agency, shot stock, and worked assignments (including a year or so with the L.A. Dodgers). He has been directly involved in photography for the last thirty years and has seen the revolution in technology. In 1988, Bill was awarded an honorary Masters of Science degree from the Brooks Institute. He is currently the editor of *Rangefinder* magazine.

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Photograph by Dennis Orchard.

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Photograph by Frank Frost.

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Photograph by Al Gordon.

[THE PHOTOGRAPHERS]

Michael J. Ayers, PPA-Certified, M.Photog., Cr., APM, AOPA, AEPA, AHPA. Michael Ayers, WPPI's 1997 International Portrait Photographer of the Year, is a studio owner from Lima, Ohio. He has lectured about portraiture and his "album architecture" all across North America and has also been a featured speaker in Europe.

Janet Baker Richardson. From a successful career as a producer of television commercials, Janet was drawn toward photographing children because of the simplicity and honesty of the profession. Not having the funds for studio lights when she started out, Janet mastered the use of outdoor and window light and has subsequently created a meaningful niche in the world of children's portraiture. Janet lives with her family in Los Angeles, where she runs a home-based business.

Becker. Becker, who goes by only his last name, is a gregarious, likeable wedding photojournalist who operates a successful studio in Mission Viejo, California. He has been a featured speaker at WPPI and has also competed and excelled in international print competition. Visit his web site at: www.thebecker.com.

Vladimir Bekker. Vladimir Bekker, owner of Concord Photography in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, specializes in weddings and environmental portraits. An immigrant from the Ukraine, Vladimir took up photography when he was a boy. He graduated from Lvov Polytechnical University with a master's degree in architecture, which explains why many of his wedding images include architectural details. His studio photographs over 100 weddings a year. He has won numerous international awards for his prints and albums.

Marcus Bell. Marcus Bell's creative vision, fluid, natural style, and sensitivity have made him one of Australia's

most revered photographers. It's this talent combined with his natural ability to make people feel at ease in front of the lens that attract so many of his clients. Marcus's comprehensive portfolio of work clearly illustrates his natural flair and versatility. His work has been published in numerous magazines in Australia and overseas, including *Black & White*, *Capture*, *Portfolio Bride* and countless other bridal magazines.

Don Blair. For over 50 years, the name Don Blair has been synonymous with fine portraiture, craftsmanship, and extraordinary contributions to the industry. Don Blair, who passed away in 2004, was a master craftsman and a gifted and caring educator—hailed as a leader in this field. Don was well known for sharing his wealth knowledge with photographers throughout the United States and in numerous other countries. It's no accident that in professional circles such as PPA, Camera Craftsmen of America, Intermountain Professional Photographers Association, and WPPI he was among the most respected of all portrait photographers. He was affectionately known to many as "Big Daddy."

Amy Cantrell. Amy Cantrell, a commercial, editorial, and fine-art photographer, has a passion for photographing people. She has made her reputation photographing celebrities and executives in the Los Angeles area and has had her work featured on the covers of many prominent magazines. She recently became interested in photographing weddings and successfully employs her people skills in this field, as well. She was voted Professional Photographers of Los Angeles County's (PPLAC) Photographer of the Year in 1999 and is currently the president of that organization. Several of her exhibits have been reviewed favorably by the *Los Angeles Times* and other

publications. You can visit her web site at www.amy.cantrell.com.

Ron Capobianco. Ron Capobianco has been a professional photographer for over twenty-five years. Based in New York and working throughout the U.S. and Europe as a fashion and beauty/editorial photographer, he has a broad knowledge of the photographic profession. Ron has a background shooting architecture, corporate images, and annual reports. His commercial work has been seen in *Vogue*, *W*, *Glamour*, *New York*, *French Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, the *New York Times*, and *Madam Figaro*. His wedding work has been seen in *Modern Bride*, *Bride's*, *Wedding Bells*, *Manhattan Bride*, and other bridal publications. He also has collaborated on several book projects including, *Eclectic Living: At Home with Bari Lyn* (Harper Collins, 1998) and *Hair: The Inter-Beauty Collection* (Intercommunication Magazine, 1979) by Elena Domo. His work has been exhibited at galleries in NY and Paris.

Anthony Cava, BA, MPA, APPO. Born and raised in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, Anthony Cava owns and operates Photolux Studio with his brother, Frank. Frank and Anthony's parents originally founded Photolux as a wedding/portrait studio, thirty years ago. Anthony joined WPPI and the Professional Photographers of Canada ten years ago. At one time, he was the youngest Master of Photographic Arts (MPA) in Canada. Cava won WPPI's Grand Award for the year with the first print that he ever entered in competition.

Tony Corbell. Since beginning his photography career, Tony has photographed three U.S. presidents, numerous heads of state, about 550 brides and grooms, a couple of astronauts, and lots of famous and not-so-famous faces. In his travels he has photographed lions in Africa, sunflower fields in Tuscany, Mayan ruins and street vendors in Mexico, and volleyball players at the Olympics. Along the way, Tony has spoken at over 250 seminars and workshops nationally and internationally. He is the recipient of the highest honor from WPPI, the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Stephen Dantzig, Psy.D. Dr. Stephen Dantzig owns and operates a small commercial studio in Honolulu, Hawaii. His work ranges from commercial fashion to products, and interiors to executive portraits.

Terry Deglau. Terry Deglau has been a professional portrait photographer for over forty years. He is the for-

mer manager of trade relations at Eastman Kodak Company. Terry is a Rochester Institute of Technology graduate with a degree in Photographic Science and a marketing degree from the University of Pittsburgh. Terry has lectured extensively throughout the United States and around the world.

William L. Duncan, M.Photog., CPP, APM, AOPM, AEPA. Bill Duncan was one of the original members of WPPI with three levels of advancement. He has been a consistent winner in print competitions from all organizations and is known around the country for his unique images. He is the instructor of the "Artistry in the Language of Light" seminars.

Gary Fagan, M.Photog.,Cr., CPP. Gary, with his wife Jan, owns and operates a studio in Dubuque, Iowa. Gary concentrates on families and high-school seniors, using his half-acre outdoor studio as the setting. At a recent WPPI convention, Gary was awarded WPPI's Accolade of Lifetime Excellence. He was also awarded the International Portrait of the Year Award by that same organization. At the Heart of America convention, he had the Top Master Print and the Best of Show. For the highest-scoring master print in the region, Gary received the Regional Gold Medallion Award at the PPA national convention ASP (American Society of Photographers) banquet.

Deborah Lynn Ferro. A professional photographer since 1996, Deborah Lynn calls upon her background as a watercolor artist. She has studied with master photographers all over the world, including, Michael Taylor, Helen Yancy, Bobbi Lane, Monte Zucker, and Tim Kelly. Deborah has earned her Masters and Photographic Craftsman degrees from PPA. In addition to being a fine photographer, she is an accomplished digital artist and is coauthor of *Wedding Photography with Adobe® Photoshop®* (Amherst Media, 2003).

Rick Ferro, CPP. Rick Ferro has served as senior wedding photographer at Walt Disney World. In his twenty-five years of experience, he has photographed over 10,000 weddings and received numerous awards, including having prints accepted into PPA's Permanent Loan Collection. He has won numerous awards from WPPI and he is the author of *Wedding Photography: Creative Techniques for Lighting, Posing, and Marketing* (3rd ed., 2004), and is coauthor of *Wedding Photography with Adobe Photoshop* (2003), both from Amherst Media.

Frank A. Frost, Jr., PPA-Certified, M.Photog.,Cr., APM, AOPA, AEPA, AHPA. Located in the heart of the Southwest, Frank Frost has been creating his own classic portraiture in Albuquerque, New Mexico for over twenty years. Believing that “success is in the details,” Frank pursues both the artistry and business of photography with remarkable results, earning him numerous awards from WPPI and PPA along the way. His photographic ability stems from an instinctive flair for posing, composition and lighting.

Jennifer George Walker. Jennifer George Walker runs her studio out of her home in the San Diego, California community of Del Mar. The affluent neighborhood is close to the beach and a variety of beautiful shooting locations, and is lush with prospective clients. She has won the California Photographer of the Year and been the winner of the People’s Choice Award 2001 at the Professional Photographers of California Convention. In 2003, Jennifer was the Premiere category Grand Award winner at WPPI. You can view more of Walker’s images at www.jwalkerphotography.com.

Alfred Gordon. Recognized as one of Florida’s top-ten photographers in 2001, 2002, and 2003, Al Gordon operates a full-service studio and has photographed weddings throughout the Southeast. He holds the Master Photographer and Photographic Craftsman degrees from the PPA. He is also a Certified Professional Photographer from the PPA, and has earned the AOPA degree from WPPI. He received the coveted Kodak Trylon Gallery Award twice, and has images in the coveted ASP Masters Loan Collection.

Dale P. Hansen, PPA Cert., APM, AOPA. Dale Hansen holds a bachelor of arts degree from Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California and has had many of his photographs published nationally, in such publications as *Audubon*, *National Geographic*, *World Book* and the cover of *PPA Storyteller* in March 1999.

Jeff and Kathleen Hawkins. Jeff and Kathleen Hawkins operate a high-end wedding and portrait photography studio in Orlando, Florida. They have authored several books, including *Professional Marketing & Selling Techniques for Wedding Photographers* (2001) and *Professional Techniques for Digital Wedding Photography* (2nd ed., 2004), both published by Amherst Media. Jeff Hawkins has been a professional photographer for over twenty

years. Kathleen Hawkins holds a masters degree in business administration and is past president of the Wedding Professionals of Central Florida (WPCF) and past affiliate vice president for the National Association of Catering Executives (NACE). Visit their web site at: www.jeffhawkins.com.

Elizabeth Homan. Elizabeth Homan owns and operates Artistic Images and is assisted by her husband, Trey and her parents, Penny and Sterling. They opened their country styled studio in 1996. Elizabeth holds a BA from Texas Christian University and was decorated by PPA as the youngest Master Photographer in Texas in 1998 and is the recipient of many awards, including ten Fujifilm Masterpiece Awards, PPA’s Best Wedding Album in the Southwest Region for six years, and two perfect scores of 100 in PPA national print competitions.

Tibor Imely. Imely Photography is known as one of the most prestigious studios in the Tampa Bay area. Tibor, a relative newcomer to print competition, entered eighteen prints in 2004’s WPPI Awards of Excellence 16x20 Print Competition. Of that number, he received a First Place award, two Third Place awards, and thirteen Honorable Mentions. He has won WPPI’s Accolade of Photographic Mastery and Accolade of Outstanding Achievement, and was recently presented by WPPI with a Fujifilm New Approach Award for new and innovative solutions to tried-and-true photographic methods.

Claude Jodoin. Claude Jodoin is an award-winning photographer from Detroit, Michigan. He has been involved in digital imaging since 1986 and has not used film since 1999. He is an event specialist and also shoots numerous weddings and portrait sessions throughout the year. You can e-mail him at claudej1@aol.com.

Giorgio Karayiannis. Giorgio Karayiannis is one of those rare photographers who specializes in editorial, fashion, advertising, commercial, and portrait photography—and is successful at each discipline. He has been a technical photographic adviser for the Ilford Imaging Group International and is recognized for his ability to produce graphically intense images. He was recently awarded the Australian Institute of Australian Photographers’ (AIPP) Editorial Photographer of the Year Award and AIPP’s Victorian Portrait Photographer of the Year Award, and has also been an award winner at WPPI conventions.

Kevin Kubota. Kevin Kubota formed Kubota Photo-Design in 1990 as a solution to stifled personal creativity. The studio shoots a mixture of wedding, portrait, and commercial photography. Kubota Photo-Design was one of the early pioneering studios of pure digital wedding photography in the late 1990s and began lecturing and training other photographers to make a successful transition from film to digital.

Cal Landau. Cal Landau started his photography business in 1996. He was an art major in college in the late 1960s, and though his mother was a talented artist, he did not inherit her skills, and spent the next thirty years trying to become a professional race car driver. His father was always a photo hobbyist and gave him a Nikkormat, with which he took pictures of auto racing and bicycle racing for small magazines for fun. One day, someone who crewed for Cal's race car asked him to shoot his wedding. Cal turned him down a few times and finally gave in. "Of course everyone knows the rest of the story: I fell in love with this job. So at 54, I am a very late bloomer and I pinch myself every day for how good I have it."

Robert Lino, M.Photos.,Cr., PMP, AOPM, AEPA, FDPE, FSA. Robert Lino of Miami, Florida specializes in fine portraiture and social events. His style is formal and elegant, and he excels in stylized poses. His ability to capture feeling and emotion in every image is unparalleled. Lino is a highly decorated photographer in national and international print competitions and is a regular on the workshop and seminar circuit.

Robert Love, APM, AOPA, AEPA, M.Photos.,Cr., CPP and Suzanne Love, Cr. Photos. Robert Love is a member of Camera Craftsmen of America, one of forty active members in the world. He and his wife, Suzanne, create all of their images on location. Preferring the early evening "love light," they have claimed the outdoors as their "studio." This gives their images a feeling of romance and tranquillity.

Charles and Jennifer Maring. Charles and Jennifer Maring own Maring Photography Inc. in Wallingford, Connecticut. Charles is a second-generation photographer, his parents having operated a successful studio in the New England area for many years. His parents now operate Rlab (www.resolutionlab.com), a digital lab that does all of the work for Maring Photography, as well as for other discriminating photographers in need of high-end

digital work. Charles Maring is the winner of the WPPI 2001 Album of the Year Award. His work was recently featured in *People* magazine, which ran six pages of his images from the Star Jones wedding.

Heidi Mauracher, M. Photos., Cr. CPP, FBIPP, AOPA, AEPA. The late Heidi Mauracher was one of the most acclaimed portrait and wedding photographers of our day. Her unique style earned her more accolades and awards from the professional organizations (PPA and WPPI) than any other contemporary photographer. Sadly, she lost her battle with cancer in 2003. She will be missed by all who knew her and knew her work and especially by those of us fortunate enough to spend a few late nights talking with her about her passion and greatest love, photography.

Leslie McIntosh. Continuing a family tradition into the new millennium, Leslie McIntosh represents a new generation of high-quality portrait artists. Recently returning to Virginia Beach to join the McIntosh family business, Leslie completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Art Institute of Chicago, moving on to London and then Hamburg to build a successful career in the advertising and fashion photography business. She sensitively captures the mood of a subject's character, personality, and stage of life. Leslie has specialized in families, mothers and children, along with high school seniors, but is open to all markets.

William S. McIntosh, M.Photos.,Cr., F-ASP. Bill McIntosh photographs executives and their families all over the United States and travels to England frequently on special assignments. He has lectured all over the world. His popular books, *Location Portraiture: The Story Behind the Art* (Tiffen Company LLC, 1996) and *Classic Portrait Photography: Techniques and Images from a Master Photographer* (Amherst Media, 2004), are sold in bookstores and other outlets around the country.

Caresse Muir. Caresse Muir began her home-based business seven years ago, specializing in family, high school senior, and children's portraits. Four years ago she began photographing weddings. She is a member of WPPI and frequently enters print competition.

Melanie Maganias Nashan. Melanie Maganias Nashan, founder of Nashan Photographers, Inc. in Livingston, Montana, specializes in weddings; however, she also photographs portraits, commercial/product work,

and architecture. Her striking images have been published in such well-known magazines as *Martha Stewart Weddings*, *The Knot*, *Bride's*, *Modern Bride*, and *Sunset* magazine. In 2003, *PDN* (Photo District News) named her one of America's Top 15 wedding photographers.

Dennis Orchard. Dennis Orchard is an award-winning photographer from Great Britain. He has been a speaker and an award winner at WPPI conventions and print competitions. He is a member of the British Guild of portrait and wedding photographers.

Parker Pfister. Parker Pfister is the consummate wedding photographer. Located in Hillsboro, Ohio, he also shoots weddings in neighboring states and is quickly developing a national celebrity. He is passionate about his work and can't imagine doing anything else (although he has a beautiful portfolio of nature images). Visit: www.pfisterphoto-art.com.

Norman Phillips, AOPA. Norman Phillips has been awarded the WPPI Accolade of Outstanding Photographic Achievement (AOPA), is a registered Master Photographer with Britain's Master Photographers Association, is a Fellow of the Society of Wedding & Portrait Photographers, and a Technical Fellow of Chicagoland Professional Photographers Association. He is a frequent contributor to photographic publications, a print judge, and a guest speaker at seminars and workshops across the country.

Ray Prevost. Ray Prevost is a microbiologist who worked for twenty-seven years as a medical technician in the Modesto, California area. He has always been interested in photography, but it wasn't until his two daughters were in college that he decided to open up his studio full time. In 1992, he received certification from PPA, and after four years of submitting prints, received his Master Photographer degree in 1996. Ray is a member of Stanislaus Professional Photographers, Professional Photographers of California, PPA, and WPPI.

Stephen Pugh. Stephen Pugh is an award-winning wedding photographer from Great Britain. He is a member of both WPPI and the British Guild and has won numerous awards in international print competitions.

Fran Reisner. Fran Reisner is a national award-winning photographer from Frisco, Texas. She is a Brooks Institute graduate and has twice been named Dallas Photographer of the Year. She is a past president of the Dallas Professional Photographers Association. She runs a highly

successful low-volume portrait/wedding business from the studio she designed and built on her residential property in Frisco, Texas. She has won numerous state, regional, and national awards for her photography.

Patrick Rice, M.Photog.Cr., CPP, AHPA. Patrick Rice is an award-winning portrait and wedding photographer with over twenty-five years in the profession. He is a popular lecturer and judge across the United States and Canada and has authored numerous books, including *Digital Infrared Photography* (2004) and *Professional Techniques for Black & White Digital Photography* (2005), both by Amherst Media.

Martin Schembri, M.Photog., AIPP. Martin Schembri has been winning national awards in his native Australia for twenty years. He has achieved a Double Master of Photography degree from the Australian Institute of Professional Photography. He is an internationally recognized portrait, wedding, and commercial photographer and has conducted worldwide seminars on his unique style of creative photography.

Joseph and Louise Simone. Joseph and Louise Simone of Montreal, Quebec, Canada are two highly decorated international photographers and teachers. They have been a team since 1975, the year they established their Montreal studio. The Simones constantly strive to give their clients a true work of art, a portrait that will pull at their heartstrings and command a very special position within the home or office, much like artist-painted portraits throughout history. The Simones have lectured in France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and the United States.

Kenneth Sklute. Beginning his photography career at the age of sixteen in Long Island, New York, Kenneth quickly advanced to shooting an average of 150 weddings a year. He purchased his first studio in 1984 and soon after received his Masters degree from PPA in 1986. In 1996, he moved to Arizona, where he enjoys a thriving business. Kenneth is much decorated, having been named Long Island Wedding Photographer of the Year fourteen times, and has often been named PPA Photographer of the Year and APPA Wedding Photographer of the Year. He has also received numerous Fuji Masterpiece Awards and Kodak Gallery Awards.

David Anthony Williams, M.Photog., FRPS, AOPA. David Anthony Williams owns and operates a wedding

studio in Ashburton, Victoria, Australia. In 1992, he achieved the rare distinction of Associateship and Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain (FRPS) on the same day. Through the annual Australian Professional Photography Awards system, Williams achieved the level of Master of Photography with Gold Bar—the equivalent of a double master. In 2000, he was awarded the Accolade of Outstanding Photographic Achievement from WPPI, and was a Grand Award winner at their annual conventions in both 1997 and 2000.

Jeffrey and Julia Woods. Jeffrey and Julia Woods are award-winning wedding and portrait photographers from Washington, IL, who work as a team. They have been awarded Best Wedding Album of the Year for 2002 and 2003, two Fuji Masterpiece awards, a Kodak Gallery Award, and Best of Show at the APPI fall convention. In 2002 and 2003, they were named Top Ten Photographers in Illinois. To see more of their beautiful images, just visit www.jwweddinglife.com.

David Worthington, L.M.P.A. David Worthington is a professional photographer who specializes in classical

wedding photography. David is one of only two photographers in the northwest UK to have a wedding image published in a book celebrating the best professional photos from photographers over the last fifty years. This is indeed a fine achievement as only fifty images were selected from entries sent from around the world. Two of David's most recent awards include the 2003 Classical Wedding Photographer of the Year Award for the UK, Northwest Region, and 2003 Licentiate Wedding Photographer of the Year, UK, Northwest Region.

Monte Zucker. When it comes to perfection in posing and lighting, timeless imagery, and contemporary, yet classical photographs, Monte Zucker is world famous. He's been bestowed every major honor the photographic profession offers, including WPPI's Lifetime Achievement Award. In his endeavor to educate photographers at the highest level, Monte, along with his partner, Gary Bernstein, has created an information-based web site for photographers, www.Zuga.net.

[INTRODUCTION]

Any time you try to pose two or more people in a photograph and render them looking happy and relaxed, you'll understand why professional portrait photographers are so well paid. Photographing portraits of groups is not easy. Many group portraits are family portraits—records of happiness and togetherness. Taken every few years,

the family portrait provides cherished memories of how the family looked “back then” and a fond record of the children’s growth.

Family groups taken in the home show the familiar warmth of home and, according to many, probably bring the largest economic return. Outdoor family portraits are a close second, with the studio portrait usually ranking last in terms of popularity and sales.

When and why do people have a family portrait made? Master photographer Robert Love says, “In our area, the number-one reason that clients call us to create a family portrait is because the complete family is getting together for a special occasion. Usually the parents have one or more grown children who don’t live at home anymore. More often than not, this person is married and has a family, as well. Now we have an opportunity to create a third-generation memento. With these extended families, we have photographed from eight to thirty people in one image.”

A group portrait is only good if each of the individuals look great in the portrait. You should be able to look at each person in the portrait and ask, “Could each of these individual portraits stand alone?” If the answer is “Yes,” then the photographer has done a good job.

According to one of the great group portrait photographers, Monte Zucker, “The first thing to remember is that each person in the group is interested primarily in how he or she looks. So, that means that you have to pay attention to every person in the group, individually. No matter how good the pattern of the group, if people don’t like the way they look, all your time and effort are wasted.”

Robert Love concurs: “Each person in a group must look great—as if they were photographed alone.” Love makes it a point, in fact, to pose and create great individual portraits within his groups, a technique that takes time and patience to perfect.

Great group portraits do not only capture everyone in the group looking good; they should have a style and rhythm. Fine group images have direction, motion, and all the visual elements that are found in fine portraits and in art. These pictures possess the means to keep a viewer looking and delving long after the visual information in the picture is digested.

In addition to family portraits, you will see many wedding group portraits in this book, primarily because weddings are the occasion for the “spectacular” group, where everyone is dressed formally, looks great, and is in a happy and joyous mood. The couple will often require

Rich fall colors provide the ideal backdrop for a family portrait. Not only is this a beautiful setting, it is an expertly posed and executed portrait. Note the first phase in understanding how to create a fine group portrait—there is a design to the arrangement of people within the group. Photograph by Michael Ayers.

the wedding photographer to shoot a set number of groups from both sides of the family so that there is a permanent and stylized memory of the most important day in their lives.

As in any learning process, small steps are first required before knowledge is attained. In this case, I felt it important to include “couples” as groups. The technical and aesthetic problems involved in making a fine portrait of an individual are considerable; adding another person more than doubles the level of difficulty. Also, many of the techniques involved in posing couples are identical to those used in photographing groups of three or more. So couples represent the building blocks of group portraiture.

It is my hope that you will not only learn the technical side of group portraiture from this book—how to pose, light, and photograph groups on a higher plane—but that you will also become a fan of the design systems used in creating compelling group portraits. This is the path to a higher level of photography and self-expression.

To illustrate this book, I have called upon some of the finest and most decorated portrait and wedding photographers in the world. Some of them I know personally, others I know their work well, and many I have heard lecture throughout the country. Some are newcomers to the limelight, but in every case, their group portraits are exemplary. Many of the photographers included in this book have been honored repeatedly by the country's top professional organizations, the Professional Photographers of America (PPA) and Wedding and Portrait



Photographers International (WPPI). I want to take the opportunity to thank all of the great photographers for their participation in this book. Without them, this book would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my illustrator and wife, Shell Dominica Nigro, for her enthusiasm and help in preparing this book.

I would especially like to thank the following photographers for their technical assistance, boundless expertise, and especially for their endless patience: Michael Ayers, Robert Love, Bill McIntosh, Norman Phillips, and Monte Zucker.

While this book will not be the equivalent of years of experience, it is my hope that you will learn from the masters how to photograph groups of people with style, artistry, technical excellence, and professionalism.

[1]

CAMERAS FOR GROUP PORTRAITURE

Since the first edition of this book was published, digital SLRs have started to replace every other camera type and format used in professional portraiture, including group portrait photography. Film cameras do, however, continue to be used by many accomplished and successful photographers. In light of this, we'll begin this chapter with film

and film cameras, but move on quickly to digital models and how they are being used by today's group portrait photographers.

FILM CAMERAS

Large-format cameras and films—4x5-inch and larger—are certainly good tools with which to make large group portraits. They have inherent camera movements, like swings and tilts, which allow the photographer to “bend” or move the plane of focus to more closely

Look at the individual zones of exposure in this image. The foreground is a strip of tile that is fully lit by the sun. The bride is lit indirectly with light bouncing around in the doorway and some diffuse and direct sunlight. The bridesmaids and flower girls are deep in shadow and are just barely visible, an effect this photographer uses on occasion. Knowing the film, its exposure latitude, and previsualizing the image made this “impossible” image a huge success. Photograph by Kenneth Sklute.



accommodate the shape of the group. Thus, subjects at varying distances from the camera can all be in focus with a few simple camera movements.

The large negative size also makes image quality another of the hallmarks of large-format group photography.

However, the biggest limitation of large format is the loss of spontaneity. The photographer must first focus and compose on the camera's groundglass with the lens open. Any corrective swings, tilts, or shifts are engaged, the lens is stopped down, and then the shutter closed. Once this happens and the photographer inserts a film holder in the camera back, he or she loses contact with the group, at least through the lens. The photographer can no longer see what the lens sees.

Preparing the camera and subjects for a portrait takes time, even for seasoned photographers. Groups, especially the younger members, quickly lose interest, and this will be painfully evident in the proofs. The subjects must remain motionless once the image is focused.

Small- and medium-format cameras have almost completely replaced large format for group portraiture. There is a wide assortment of lenses and accessories available for these formats. Soft-focus lenses, diffusion and warming filters, a myriad of different focal lengths and a wide variety of special effects accessories—matte boxes, vignettors, and bellows lens shades—are available, making 35mm and medium format the choice of most group portrait photographers.

FILM CHOICE

Extremely slow and ultrafast films should generally be avoided for most group situations. Black & white and color films in the ISO 25 range tend to be too contrasty for portraits, and exposure latitude is minimal with these films. With the slower, more contrasty films, you tend to lose delicate shadow and highlight detail if exposure is even slightly off.

Ultrafast films in the ISO 1000–3200 range offer an ability to shoot in near darkness but produce a larger-than-normal grain pattern and lower-than-normal contrast. Many photographers exploit the larger grain and use these films in color and black & white for special painterly effects in their images.

Today's color negative films in the ISO 100–400 range have amazing grain structure compared to films of only a

few years ago. They often possess mind-boggling exposure latitude, which can range from –2 to +3 stops under or over normal exposure. Optimum exposure is still and will always be recommended, but to say that these films are forgiving is an understatement.

[Small- and medium-format cameras have almost completely replaced large format for group portraiture.]

Kodak and Fujifilm offer “families” of color negative films. Within these families are different speeds, from ISO 160 to 800, for example, and either varying contrast or color saturation, but with the same color palette. Kodak's Portra films include speeds from ISO 160 to 800 and are available in NC (natural color) or VC (vivid color) versions. Kodak even offers an ISO 100 tungsten-balanced Portra film. Fujicolor Portrait films, available in a similar range of speeds, offer similar skin-tone rendition among the different films as well as good performance under mixed lighting conditions, because of a fourth color layer added to the emulsion.

These films are ideal choices for portrait photographers because the different speeds and format sizes can be used in the same session with minimal color differences observed in the final prints. Another advantage of these films is that they have similar printing characteristics and identical scanner settings, meaning that different speed films from the same film family can be scanned at the same settings.

Black & White Films. With black & white portraits, contrast is more important than it is in color portraits, where there is no practical means of altering contrast, except by lighting. You can alter the contrast of a black & white negative by increasing or decreasing development. By increasing negative development, you increase contrast; decrease development and you lower contrast.

This is important to know, because the contrast in your portraits will vary a great deal. Those shot in bright sunlight with a minimum of fill-in illumination, or those shot in other types of contrasty lighting, should be altered in development by decreasing development a minimum of 10 percent. Portraits made under soft, shadowless light,

such as umbrella illumination, will have low contrast, so the development should be increased at least 10 percent, sometimes even 20 percent. The resulting negatives will be easier to print than if developed normally and will hold much greater detail in the important tonal areas of the portrait.

In black & white, your aim is to achieve consistent, fine-grain negatives with the maximum allowable highlight and shadow detail. If you find that your normally exposed negatives are consistently too contrasty or not contrasty enough, decrease or increase development accordingly. (Note that decreasing development decreases contrast; increasing development time increases contrast.) If your negatives come out consistently over- or underexposed, then you must adjust the film speed you are using to expose the film. For instance, if you use an intermediate-speed film—ISO 100 or 125, for example, and your negatives are consistently underexposed, lower the ISO (to a setting of 80 or 64). If your negatives are consistently overexposed, increase the ISO setting on your meter.

[If you cannot obtain highlight detail by printing the negative darker, then the negative is overexposed.]

It is important to note that before you begin fine-tuning your exposure and development, you should be sure you know the difference between errors in exposure and errors in development. Underexposed negatives lack sufficient shadow detail; underdeveloped negatives lack sufficient contrast. Overexposed negatives lack highlight detail; overdeveloped negatives have excessive contrast but may have sufficient highlight detail. If you are unsure, and most become unsure in the areas of overdevelopment and overexposure, make a test print from the suspect negative. If you cannot obtain highlight detail by printing the negative darker, then the negative is overexposed. If highlight detail appears but only when the negative is printed down, then you have overdeveloped the negative.

DIGITAL SLRs

The reasons for the switch to digital are numerous—from instant verification of the image composition, expression,

and exposure to ease of shooting, to the lack of film and processing costs. Aside from digital's speed and convenience, factor in the client's feelings about digital. Most consumers regard photographers who shoot with digital SLRs as upscale and cutting edge, someone who is in-demand and at the top of his or her profession—in short, the right person for the job.

In this chapter, we'll investigate the features that will help you to select a good model, or to better understand the features of your existing one.

Price. It's not necessarily the price of the flagship camera in a manufacturer's product lineup that's important, but rather, it's the range of prices. Many photographers have decided to purchase several top-of-the-line DSLRs and then several of the lower-priced models from the same manufacturer for backup and assistants' cameras. These backups still take the same lenses and removable media cards but are less expensive than the top-of-the-line cameras.

Some of the lower-priced DSLRs might seem a bargain until you realize they may not include pro features like a PC terminal for connecting to electronic studio flash.

Dimensions and Weight. As with any camera system, ergonomics are extremely important, especially to the wedding photographer who will be working for hours on end handholding the camera with a variety of lenses. When considering a DSLR, try it out and make sure that it fits comfortably in your hand; it might be quite different than your same brand film camera.

Image Sensors. Digital cameras use image sensors rather than film to record an image. These devices are known as image sensors and presently there are two main types: CCD and CMOS sensors. CCDs (charge-coupled devices) record an image in black & white and then pass the light through an array of red, green, and blue filters to form a color image. CMOS chips (complementary metal oxide semiconductors) are a more energy-efficient imaging chip (an important consideration as digital cameras are big-time battery consumers) and somewhat less expensive to manufacture. While opinions on the aesthetic performance of the two imaging chips vary from pro to pro, both sensor types provide excellent quality image files.

Although full-frame image sensors now exist, most imaging sensors are smaller than the full-size 1x1.5-inch

Claude Jodoin shoots weddings in JPEG fine mode. Speed is the primary reason. He has learned to fine-tune his JPEGs to perfection by careful metering with an incident flashmeter that meters accurately to within $\frac{1}{10}$ of an f-stop and also by frequent white-balance measurement with the Wallace ExpoDisc. This image is a combination of shade and midday backlight, requiring an accurate white balance.

(24x36mm) 35mm frame size. While the chip size does not necessarily affect image quality or file size, it does affect lens focal length. With sensors smaller than 24x36mm, all lenses get effectively longer in focal length. This is not usually a problem where telephotos and telephoto zooms are concerned as the maximum aperture of the lens doesn't change; however, when your expensive wide-angles or wide-angle zooms become significantly less wide on the digital camera body, it can be somewhat frustrating. A 17mm lens, for example, with a 1.4X lens focal length factor becomes a 24mm lens.

Two different developments are occurring at this writing. First, chip sizes are getting larger. Several DSLRs are now available with full-size 24x36mm imaging chips, meaning that there is no change to your lenses' effective focal lengths. Secondly, camera manufacturers who have committed to smaller chip sizes have started to introduce lens lines specifically designed for digital imaging. The circle of coverage (the area of focused light falling on the film plane or digital-imaging chip) is smaller and more collimated to compensate for the smaller chip size. Thus, the lenses can be made more economically and smaller in size, yet still offer as wide a range of focal lengths as traditional lenses.

Unlike film cameras, the image sensor must be kept clean of dust and other foreign matter in order for it to perform at its optimum level. Depending on the environment where you do most of your shooting, spots may



appear on your images. Cleaning the sensor prior to every shoot will help you to minimize or eliminate such spots in your photos.

While each camera manufacturer has different recommendations for cleaning the sensor, Canon digital cameras have a sensor-cleaning mode to which the camera can be set. With the camera's reflex mirror up (a function of the cleaning mode setting), the company recommends light air from an air syringe to gently remove any foreign matter. Turning the camera off resets the mirror.



Deborah Lynn Ferro created this marvelous portrait of two sisters and then retouched and enhanced the faces in Photoshop.

One should realize the image sensor is an extremely delicate device. Do not use propelled-air cans that contain airborne propellants, which can coat the sensor in a fine mist, worsening the situation.

Effective Pixels. This is the rated size of the maximum image the sensor can record. The spec might be given as 5 million pixels or 5MP (megapixels). The higher the number of pixels, the larger the file and print size you can create from that file. Some manufacturers also give the spec in terms of Photoshop file sizes—11MB (megabytes) or

18MB TIFFs, for example, since many people think in these terms. It is important to note that some manufacturers use processing algorithms to interpolate resolution. For example, the chip size might be 6MP, yet the standard file size is 12MP because of the software interpolation.

Removable Media. Once you've captured your images, the data is stored on a memory card, microdrive, or other device. There are many card formats on the market, including CompactFlash (CF), Secure Digital (SD), and xD-Picture CardP (xD), just to name a few.

Some cameras feature dual slots for different media types, others accept only certain types of removable cards, like CompactFlash cards. Obviously, the more options you have to use larger and/or less expensive media, the more flexible the camera will be over time. The standard at this time seems to be Types I and II CF cards, plus microdrives. Microdrives, which often offer greater capacity, have only one drawback—they are susceptible to damage by shock. However, many pros still prefer them over media cards.

Reformat Your Cards. After you back up your source files, it's a good idea to erase all of the images from your memory cards and then reformat them. It simply isn't enough to delete the images, because extraneous data may remain on the card, causing data interference. After reformatting, you're ready to use the memory card again.

Never format your cards prior to backing up your files to at least two sources. Some photographers shoot an entire job on a series of cards and take them back to the studio prior to performing any backup. Others refuse to fill an entire card at any time, instead opting to download, back up, and reformat cards directly during a shoot. Downloading images from cards on site requires a card reader and a storage device—either a laptop or portable hard drive, such as an Apple iPod. In the wedding business, many photographers have a full-time assistant whose job it is to guarantee that cards are backed up and reformatted, and that the data is stored safely and written to either CDs or DVDs before anyone leaves the event.

File Types. Digital SLRs offer the means to shoot in several file modes, the two most popular of which are RAW mode and JPEG mode.

RAW files offer the benefit of retaining the highest amount of image data from the original capture. If you are shooting on the go and need fast burst rates, then RAW file capture will slow you down. RAW files will also fill up your storage cards or microdrives much quicker because of their larger size. RAW files do, however, offer you the ability to almost completely correct for underexposure and other defects.

Most pro-quality DSLRs also give you the option of shooting in the JPEG fine mode (sometimes called JPEG highest quality mode). Shooting in JPEG mode creates smaller files, so you can save more images per memory card or storage device. It also does not take as long to

write the JPEG files to memory, allowing you to work much faster. Shooting in this mode allows the convenience and speed of the format while maintaining the integrity of the file.

The biggest drawback to JPEG files is that they utilize a “lossy” compression format, meaning that they are subject to degradation by repeated opening and closing of the file. Most photographers who shoot in JPEG mode will either save the file as a JPEG copy each time they work on it, or save it to a lossless TIFF format, meaning that it can be saved again and again without degradation.

It should be noted that when shooting JPEGs, it is essential to expose correctly to within a fraction of an f-stop and also to set the white balance correctly to maintain the integrity of color in the file. Mistakes at the JPEG level leave you little flexibility and opportunity to salvage poorly exposed files. As most pros will tell you, shooting JPEGs makes you a much more disciplined photographer because there is less latitude for error.

Only a few years ago RAW file processing software was limited to the camera manufacturer's software, which was often slow and difficult to use. Over time the software and process has improved drastically, and with the introduction of independent software like Adobe Camera RAW and Phase One's Capture One DSLR, RAW file processing is not nearly as daunting. Further, new cameras with bigger buffers (temporary memory that holds captured images that have not yet been written to the removable media) and buffer upgrades for existing cameras have improved the situation to the point where many pros shoot RAW files much of the time.

[Shooting JPEGs makes you a much more disciplined photographer because there is less latitude for error.]

The first step is to access the files and save them for editing, storage, and output. You can access your images using the software supplied with your camera or photo-editing software that recognizes the RAW file type. Usually, image-browsing software is used to initially access the images. Your camera manufacturer may supply this software or you may utilize a third-party program.



DSLRs allow you to shoot in low light with ultrafast lenses, giving you the ability to capture spontaneous and fleeting moments while working unobserved. Photograph by Martin Schembri.

After displaying and verifying that all of the files exist on the card, save a version of all of your source files prior to making any modifications or adjustments. And then, make another copy of all of your source files. Most people use CD-ROMs or DVDs for this purpose because the medium is inexpensive and writes quickly from most computers. You can also save your source files to an auxiliary hard drive.

Photographers like Becker download their images to a laptop in the field. Becker uses a G4 Powerbook and a Lexar FireWire card reader. Once the cards are downloaded, he transfers the downloads folder to an iPod (you can use any portable external FireWire hard drive).

Get into the habit of creating multiple versions of your work in case you ever need to work back through your workflow process to retrieve an earlier version of a file. Once backups are made, you can process the RAW files after certain general parameters are set. You will need to establish things like your default editing program (e.g., Photoshop) and destination folder, file names, and so forth.

Files can be processed individually or batch-processed. You can apply certain characteristics to the entire batch of

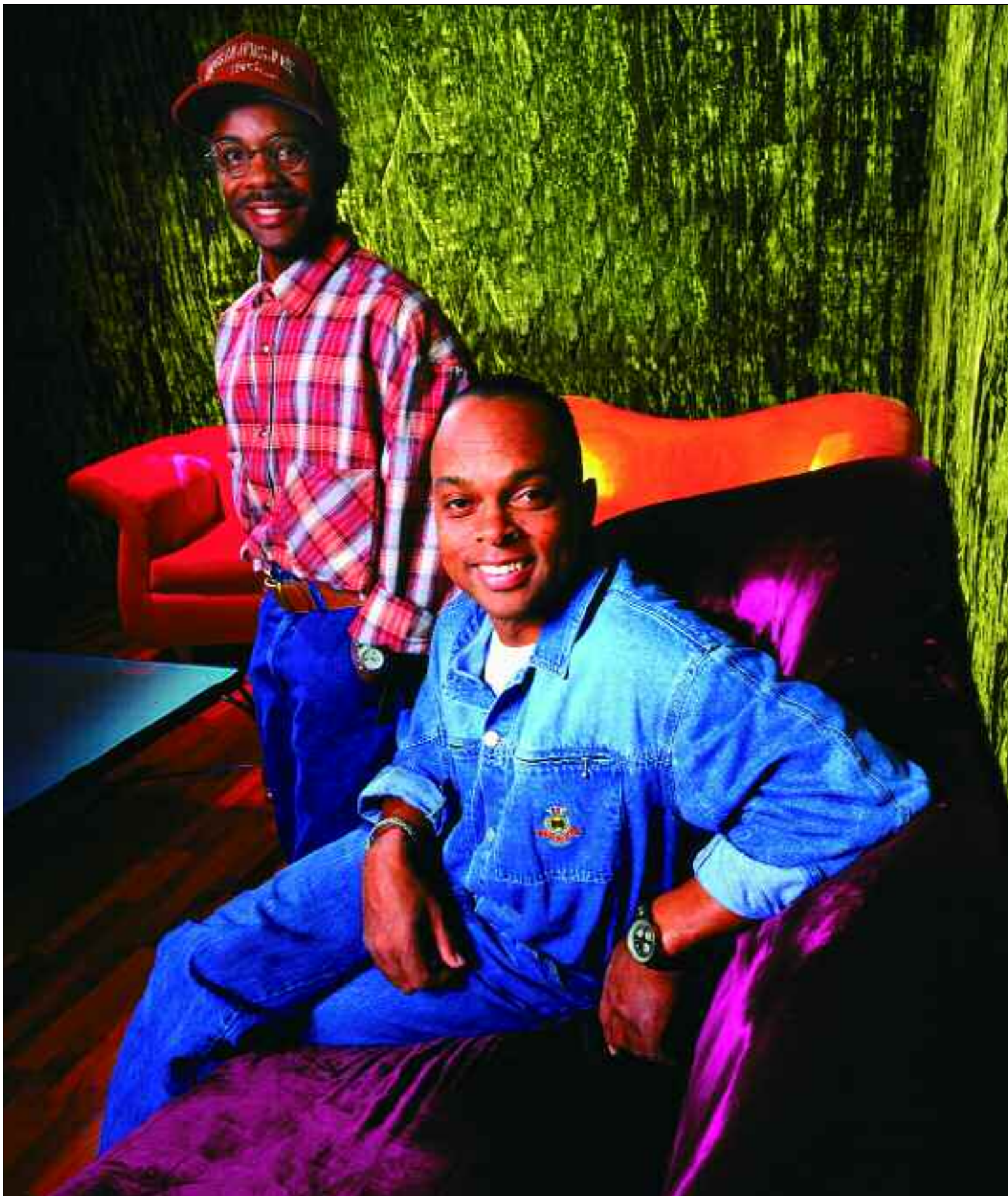
images—white balance, brightness, tagged color space, and more. Remember that your original capture data is retained in the source image file. Processing the images creates new, completely separate files. You will also have an opportunity to save the file in a variety of file formats, whichever is most convenient to your image editing workflow.

Color Space. Many DSLRs allow you to shoot in Adobe RGB 1998 or sRGB color space. There is considerable confusion over which is the “right” choice, as Adobe RGB 1998 is a wider gamut color space than sRGB. Some photographers reason, “Why shouldn’t I include the maximum range of color in the image at capture?” Others reason that sRGB is the color space of inexpensive point & shoot digital cameras and not suitable for professional applications.

The answer is clearer after reading a 2004 white paper from Fuji, which recommends,

Stay inside the sRGB color space by capturing and working in the sRGB gamut. If the photographer’s camera allows the “tagging” of ICC profiles other than sRGB, we recommend selecting the sRGB option for file creation. The native color space of many professional digital cameras is sRGB, and Fujifilm recommends the sRGB option as the working space for file manipulation when using Adobe Photoshop along with a fully calibrated monitor. End users/photographers who alter the color space of the original file by using a space other than sRGB, without being fully ICC- [color profiles for devices, including cameras, monitors, and printers] aware, are actually damaging the files that they submit to their labs.

There is also another school of thought. Many photographers who work in JPEG format use the Adobe 1998 RGB color space all the time, right up to the point that files are sent to a printer or out to the lab for printing. The reasoning is that since the color gamut is wider with Adobe 1998 RGB, more control is afforded. Photographer Claude Jodoin works in Adobe 1998 RGB, preferring to get the maximum amount of color information in the original file, then to edit the file using the same color space for maximum control of the image subtleties.



Amy Cantrell created this extremely colorful portrait of two designers in a room that is alive with saturated color. A single umbrella flash from the side was used with a wide-angle lens to make the shot. In situations like these, white balance is critical, particularly if shooting with strobes and in JPEG mode.

Is there ever a need for other color spaces? Yes. It depends on your particular workflow. For example, all the images you see in this book have been converted from their native sRGB or Adobe 1998 RGB color space to the

CMYK color space for photomechanical printing. As a general preference, I prefer images from photographers be in the Adobe 1998 RGB color space as they seem to convert more naturally to CMYK.



Ironically, if you go into Photoshop's color settings mode and select U.S. Pre-press Defaults, Photoshop automatically makes Adobe RGB 1998 the default color space. By the way, out of the box, Photoshop's default color set-

tings when installed are for Web, which assumes sRGB color space, and color management is turned off.

LCD Monitor. The size and resolution of the camera's LCD screen are important, as these screens are highly useful in determining if you got the shot or not. LCD screens range from about 1.8 inches to 2.5 inches and screen resolution ranges from around 120,000 dots to 220,000 dots.

As important as the physical specifications of the LCD is the number of playback options available. Some systems let you zoom in on the image to inspect details. Some let you navigate across the image to check different areas of the frame in close-up mode. Some camera systems allow you a thumbnail or proof-sheet review. Some of the more sophisticated systems offer a histogram (to gauge exposure) and highlight point display to determine if highlight exposure is accurate throughout the image.

White Balance. The white balance feature allows the digital camera to correct color (much like using a color correction filter) when shooting under a variety of different lighting conditions.

DSLRs have an auto white balance feature as well as a variety of white-balance presets, such as daylight, incandescent, and fluorescent, and some have the ability to dial in specific color temperatures in Kelvin degrees. (These are often related to a time of day. For example, pre-sunrise might call for a white-balance setting of 2000°K, and heavy overcast might call for a white-balance setting of 8000°K.) Most DSLRs also have a provision for a custom white-balance setting, which is essential in mixed light conditions, most indoor available-light situations, and with studio strobes. A good system that many photographers follow is to take a custom white balance of a scene where they are unsure of the lighting mix. By selecting a white



Giorgio Karayiannis is a master portrait photographer from Australia. His images convey much information about his subjects, like the girls pictured here, whose faces are not visible. Yet you can tell a lot about their companionship and curiosity from this portrait. Giorgio captured the image digitally and applied several filters in Photoshop to give the image an Impressionistic feeling.



Kevin Kubota purchased his D1X several years ago and hasn't shot a film image since. Digital is capable of capturing amazingly fine detail. Check out the almost imperceptible streaks of rain coming down—a function of having to shoot at a slow shutter speed.

and neutralizing it with custom white balance, you can be assured of an accurate color rendition.

White balance is particularly important if you are shooting highest-quality JPEG files. It is not as important if shooting in RAW file mode, since these files contain more data than the compressed JPEG files and are easily remedied later.

Some camera systems offer a white-balance bracketing feature. Obviously, the more flexibility you have in accurate white-balance recording, the less color correction you will have to perform later in Photoshop.

An accessory that many digital professionals swear by is the Wallace ExpoDisc (www.expodisc.com). The ExpoDisc attaches to your lens like a filter and provides perfect white balance and accurate exposures—whether you are shooting film or digitally. The company also makes a Pro model that lets you create a warm white balance at capture. Think of this helpful accessory as a meter for determining accurate white balance, which is crucial for digital imaging.

Lens Compatibility. If you're like most pros, you've already invested heavily in one pro 35mm SLR system. To trade in all those lenses and accessories and change to a different brand of camera would take some compelling arguments. Will your current "film" lenses fit the DSLR, and will all of their features be useable on the digital camera body? Know the answers to these questions before you invest.

Lens Conversion Factor. A 1.6X lens-conversion factor, for example, means that the rated focal length of the lens, multiplied by the factor, gives the effective focal length. A 50mm lens would become an 80mm lens using the above example. Lens speed, as mentioned above, does not change. Your f/1.8 lens would still be an f/1.8 lens.

Shutter Lag Time. This is a spec most camera manufacturers don't provide in their literature, but it is important to know before making a purchase. This is the length of time between when you press the shutter release and when the camera actually fires. Consumer and prosumer cameras (consumer cameras with pro features) have sub-

stantially longer lag times than pro systems, which are almost instantaneous, but it is still worthwhile testing out the camera in various modes to see the differences between various camera models. Shutter lag time will directly affect the camera's burst rate (see pages 28–29). Rates of shutter release delay time are usually given in milliseconds (ms) if the spec is even given. An average shutter lag time would be in the area of 90ms.

Exposure Latitude. Digital exposures are not nearly as forgiving as color negative film exposures. Exposure latitude is simply nonexistent, especially when shooting JPEGs, which is the preferred file format of most wedding and portrait photographers. Most digital photographers compare shooting digital to shooting transparency film, in which exposure latitude is $\frac{1}{2}$ f-stop or less in either direction.

With transparency film, to err on either side of correct exposure is bad; when shooting digitally, slightly underexposed images are still salvageable, while overexposed images with no highlight detail are all but lost. You will never be able to restore the detail that doesn't exist in the original exposure. For this reason, most digital images are exposed to ensure good detail in the full range of highlights and midtones, and the shadows are either left to fall into the realm of underexposure or are filled in with auxiliary light or reflectors to boost their intensity.

Evaluating Digital Exposures. There are two ways of evaluating exposure of the digital capture—by judging the histogram and by evaluating the image on the LCD. By far, the more reliable method is the histogram, but the LCD monitor provides a quick reference for making sure things are okay, and particularly if the image is sharp.



Like 35mm SLRs with motor drives, professional-grade DSLRs feature fast burst rates, allowing you to capture wonderful scenes like this group portrait gone haywire. Photograph by Marcus Bell.



Marcus Bell created this amazing bridal portrait in an almost industrial setting. Digital special effects filters like those from nik Multimedia are capable of producing both negative and positive diffusion in a single image. This is where shadows blend into highlights as they would in darkroom diffusion, and highlights blend into shadows, as happens in on-camera diffusion.

The histogram is a graph associated with each individual image file that indicates the number of pixels that exist for each brightness level in the photograph. The range of the histogram represents 0 to 255 from left to right, with 0 indicating “absolute” black and 255 indicating “absolute” white.

In an image with a good range of tones, the histogram will fill the length of the graph (i.e., it will have detailed shadows and highlights and everything in between). When an exposure has detailed highlights, these will fall in the 235–245 range; when an image has detailed blacks, these will fall in the 15–30 range (RGB mode). The his-



togram may show detail throughout (from 0 to 255) but it will trail off on either end of the graph.

Histograms are scene-dependent. In other words, the number of data points in shadows and highlights will directly relate to the subject and how it is illuminated and captured. The histogram also gives an overall view of the tonal range of the image, and the “key” of the image. A low-key image has its detail concentrated in the shadows (a high number of data points); a high-key image has

detail concentrated in the highlights. An average-key image has detail concentrated in the midtones. An image with full tonal range has a high number of pixels in all areas of the histogram.

Depending on subject matter, in a histogram representing good exposure, the data will extend to the full range, but without going off of the ends. Overexposure is indicated when data goes off the right end of the graph, which is the highlight portion of the histogram. This means that the highlights are lacking image detail, tone, and color.

In a properly exposed image the image information on the right side of the graph almost reaches the end of the scale but stops a short distance before the end.

When an image is underexposed, the image information in the histogram falls short of the right side and bunches up on the left. Although it is true that it is better to have an underexposed image than an overexposed one, it will never look as good as a properly exposed image. You can correct for underexposure using Photoshop’s Levels or Curves adjustment, but it is time consuming to adjust exposure in this manner.

Histograms are valuable in determining proper exposures. When you’re in the field, you cannot safely rely on the camera’s LCD monitor as a guide to proper exposure. LCDs vary in brightness and intensity and are usually angle-dependent, making the data difficult to interpret, especially in bright light.

Digital ISOs. Most digital camera systems feature an ISO sensitivity range from ISO 100 to 800 or 1600, in some cases. Some cameras also offer an ISO 3200 setting as a special custom function. Obviously, the wider the gamut of sensitivity, the more useful the camera system will be under a wider range of shooting conditions.

Digital ISO speeds correlate closely to actual film speeds. A real advantage of shooting digitally, though, is that digital ISO settings can be increased or decreased between frames, making digital capture inherently more flexible than shooting with film, where you are locked into a film speed for the duration of the roll of film.

Noise. Noise is a condition, not unlike excessive grain, that happens when stray electronic information affects the sensor sites. Shooting at the higher ISOs, like ISO 1600, produces a lot of digital noise in the exposure and is made worse by heat and long exposures. Noise shows up more in dark areas, making evening and night photog-



Parker Pfister captured this beautiful group portrait of three angels with his Nikon D1X and 85mm f/1.4 lens. The image was shot at f/2.7, and the photographer added noise and blurred other regions in the portrait in Photoshop, leaving only the faces sharp.

raphy problematic with digital capture. It is worth noting because it is one of the areas where digital capture is quite different from film capture.

The slower the ISO setting, the less noise (and the more contrast, although unlike when shooting film, with digital contrast is a variable you can control at the time of capture).

It is important to note that many image-editing programs contain filters that automatically reduce noise levels. New products, such as nik Multimedia's Dfine, a noise-reducing plug-in filter for Adobe Photoshop, effectively reduce image noise post-capture.

Contrast. Professional-grade DSLRs have a setting for contrast, which most photographers keep on the low side. According to award-winning wedding photographer Becker, "Contrast should be set to the lowest possible contrast setting. It's always easy to add contrast later, but more difficult to take away."

Black & White Mode. Some digital cameras offer a black & white shooting mode. Others do not. Most photographers find the mode convenient, since it allows them to switch from color to black & white in an instant. Of course, the conversion is easily done later in Photoshop.

Burst Rate. Unlike film cameras, which use a motor drive to propel the film past the focal plane, there is no film-transport system in a digital camera system. The number of frames per second (fps) the camera can record is dictated by a number of factors, including write speed (how fast the image can be written to the storage media), file type, and file size. RAW files are larger than JPEGs, for example, and take longer to record, thus the burst rate is slower when shooting RAW files than it is when shooting JPEGs. Typical burst rates range from 2.5fps up to six shots, all the way up to 8fps up to forty shots. The spec to look at is the number of consecutive frames that can be

captured in a single burst—6, 8, 10, etc.—and the frames-per-second operation—3fps up to 8fps.

Batteries. So, where's the motor drive? It's been turned into a battery pack. Since you don't need motorized film transport, there is no motor drive or winder, but the cameras still look the same because the manufacturers have smartly designed the auxiliary battery packs to look just like a motor or winder attachment. While most of these cameras run on AA-size batteries, it is advisable to purchase the auxiliary battery packs since most digital camera systems (especially those with CCD sensors) chew up AAs like jelly beans. Most of the auxiliary battery packs used on DSLRs use rechargeable lithium-ion batteries.

Sharpening. Often in your camera's presets or in your RAW file processing software you will have a setting for image sharpening. You should choose none or low sharpening. The reason for this is that sharpening can eliminate data in an image and cause color shifts. Sharpening is best done in Photoshop after other post-capture effects are complete.

Metadata. DSLRs give you the option of tagging your digital image files with data, which often includes date, time, and camera settings. Many photographers don't even know where to find this information; in Photoshop, if you go to File>File Info, you will see a range of data including caption and ID information. If you then select

EXIF in the Section pull-down menu, you will see all of the data that the camera automatically tags with the file. Depending on the camera model, various other information can be written to the EXIF file, which can be useful for either the client or lab. You can also add your copyright notice and symbol (©) either from within Photoshop or from your camera's metadata setup files. Adobe Photoshop supports the information standard developed by the Newspaper Association of America (NAA) and the International Press Telecommunications Council (IPTC) to identify transmitted text and images. This standard includes entries for captions, keywords, categories, credits, and origins from Photoshop.

[Sharpening is best done in Photoshop after other post-capture effects are complete.]

Clock Settings. If using multiple cameras or multiple photographers, it's generally a good idea to sync the camera clocks. The reason is that many photographers will arrange downloaded images chronologically—in the order events happened. If one or more cameras is off by hours, this will be impossible.

[2]

TECHNICAL BASICS

A good group portrait is one that flatters each of the subjects and is pleasing to the eye. With a working knowledge of basic portrait techniques, a sense of design, and good rapport with your subjects, you can create an image that is both pleasing and salable, and one that each person in the group will cherish.



Unlike a fine portrait of an individual, a group portrait conveys a sense of importance and character about the group. A group portrait is most definitely not a snapshot. It has a prearranged sense of design and arrangement of its elements, a uniformity of expression and, in many instances, a coordination of color and clothing. These aspects, of course, are in addition to controlled lighting, posing, and composition. So as you may be beginning to see, a fine group portrait is not an easy picture to produce.

This chapter will provide an overview of some of the technical aspects of making good exposures for portraiture, and while they may not necessarily be aimed at group portraiture, these techniques are essential to good group portrait photography.

FILM VS. DIGITAL RETOUCHING

When film was dominant (a few short years ago), one of the biggest drawbacks of small- and medium-format cam-

A longer-than-normal focal length compresses your subjects and separates them from any potentially distracting backgrounds. Notice how completely the background falls out of focus in this romantic image. The foreground does the same thing. You can actually see the band of sharp focus that covers only the subjects. Photograph by Anthony Cava.



If this scene were photographed with a normal or wide-angle lens, the reeds in the background, imaged sharply, would be so distracting that the portrait would be dismal. Shooting with a long lens at a wide aperture softened the foreground and background detail, an effect that was further enhanced using selective diffusion in Photoshop. Photograph by Tibor Imely.

eras was the inability to retouch the negative. Facial irregularities, such as wrinkles, lines, and age spots, cannot be retouched out on a 35mm negative. On medium-format negatives, you can do minimal retouching, provided the “head size” is large enough on the negative. However, with groups of three or more, the head size is usually not large enough to retouch on either format.

Enter digital cameras and scanners, which provide the opportunity to use the wide scope of retouching capabilities found in Adobe Photoshop and other image-editing software. Photoshop has made traditional negative retouching a thing of the past. With a little practice one can learn a wide range of digital retouching skills. Because the image is “worked” as a positive, unlike film retouching where the negative is retouched, every action is observable. The retouched digital image can either be output directly via an inkjet or dye sublimation “photo quality” printer, or output on a digital LCD printer on tradi-

tional photographic paper. Retouching in Photoshop is much less difficult than traditional negative retouching, and Photoshop and its related plug-ins allow the ultimate in creativity in postproduction image-making.

LENSES

Whether one is using film or digital capture, the greatest advantage by far of using small- and medium-format cameras in group portraiture is the ability to see the subject through the lens up to the instant of exposure, permitting you to capture a much greater range of expressions and poses.

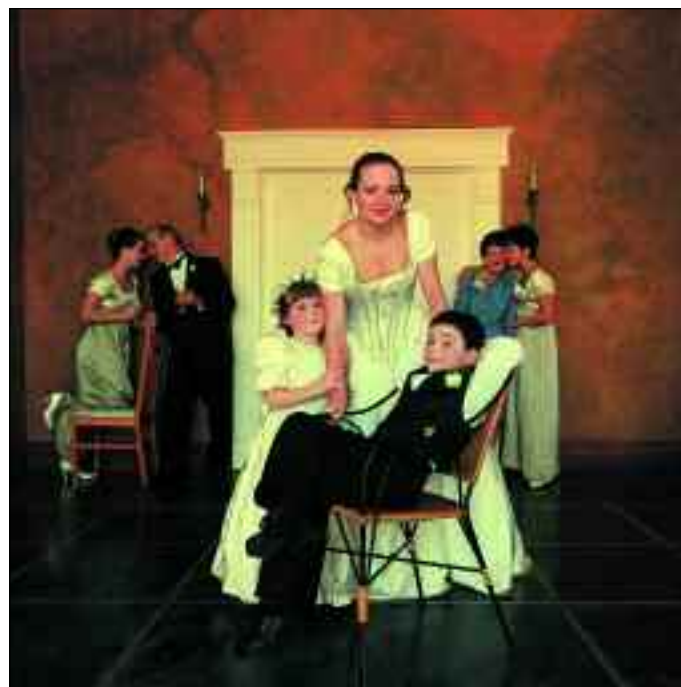
Focal Length. All types of portraiture demand that you use a longer-than-normal lens, particularly for small groups. The general rule of thumb is to use a lens that is 2x the diagonal of the film you are using. For instance, with the 35mm format, a 75 to 85mm lens is a good choice; for the 2¼-inch square format (6x6cm), 100 to



ABOVE—Lenses as long as 200mm can really blow out backgrounds and compress subjects, depending on the subject-to-camera distance. This natural-light portrait of a mother and daughter was made more intimate by the use of a very long lens. Photograph by Jennifer Maring. **TOP RIGHT**—Here you see absolutely masterful use of a wide-angle lens for group portraiture. Actually, it's three groups in one portrait. The only wide-angle distortion is visible in the receding squares of the tile floor and the pronounced front chair leg. The photographer turned the background groups inward and kept them away from frame edges, where distortion would be apparent. The wide-angle view and the wonderful posing produced an intimate storytelling image. Photograph by David Anthony Williams. **BOTTOM RIGHT**—Working with a slightly longer-than-normal lens and a precisely arranged plane of focus, the photographer was able to shoot at a fairly wide lens aperture in order to throw the background pleasantly out of focus. Sharper image details of the palms and chandelier would have been way too distracting. Photograph by David Anthony Williams.

120mm is good, and for 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ x2 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cameras (6x7cm), 110 to 150mm is recommended.

It should be noted that, depending on the lens focal-length factor, some of your normal lenses may become the equivalent of short telephotos when used on your DSLR. Additionally, some of your wide-angle lenses will not be effectively as wide. With full-frame DSLRs this is not a problem, as there is no focal-length factor, but with



chip sizes smaller than 24x36mm, there will be a multiplication factor.

These optimal portrait lenses, short telephotos, provide normal perspective without subject distortion. If using a "normal" focal length lens (50mm in 35mm format, 75 to 90mm in the medium formats), you have to move too close to the subject to attain an adequate image size, thereby altering the perspective. This proximity to the subject exaggerates subject features—noses appear elongated, chins jut out, and the backs of heads may appear smaller than normal. The phenomenon is known as fore-

shortening. The short telephoto provides a greater working distance between camera and subjects while increasing the image size to ensure normal perspective.

Some photographers prefer the longest lens possible when photographing groups because of the aforementioned foreshortening problem; for example, a 150mm lens on a 6x6cm camera. With larger groups, this keeps the people in the back of the group the same relative size as the people in the front of the group.

When space doesn't permit use of a longer lens, shorter lenses must prevail, but observe that the subjects in the front row of a large group may appear much larger than subjects in the back of the group if you get too close.

Wide-angle lenses will actually distort the subjects' appearance, particularly those closest to the frame edges. Raising the camera height, thus placing all subjects at the same relative distance from the lens, can minimize some of this effect.

Conversely, you can use a much longer lens if you have the working room. A 200mm lens, for instance, is a beautiful portrait lens for 35mm because it provides very shallow depth of field and throws the background completely out of focus, providing a backdrop that won't distract from the subjects. When used at wider apertures, this focal length provides a very shallow band of focus that can be used to accentuate just the eyes, for instance, or just the frontal planes of the faces.

Avoid using extreme telephotos (300mm and longer for 35mm). With them, perspective grows distorted—

subjects' features appear compressed, depending on the working distance—the nose often appears pasted to the subject's face, and the ears seem parallel to the eyes. Also, you are a far distance away from your subjects with such a lens, making communication difficult or impossible. You want to be close enough so that you can converse normally without shouting out posing instructions.

When making $\frac{3}{4}$ - or full-length group portraits, it is best to use the normal focal length lens for your camera. This lens will provide a normal, undistorted perspective because you are farther away from your subject than when making a close-up portrait. The only problem you may encounter is that the subjects may not tonally separate from the background with the normal lens. It is desirable to have the background slightly out of focus so that the viewer's attention goes to the subject, rather than to the background. With the normal lens, the depth of field is

Depth of field is critical in this family portrait by Leslie McIntosh. In order to get the group sharp from front to back, Leslie split focus between the two extremes—the forward-most child and the child farthest from the camera—allowing the depth of field to carry sharpness in front of and behind the focus point. As this was a flash-fill situation at twilight, Leslie's aperture was dictated by the ambient light. The exposure was $\frac{1}{8}$ second at f/8 on a Hasselblad camera.





Critical focusing is required when working at the maximum aperture of a lens. Here Marcus Bell, working in extremely low mixed light (twilight and street lamps), was forced to shoot at $\frac{1}{15}$ second wide open (f/1.4) with a 35mm f/1.4 lens. This is one of his favorite lenses as it reveals a different visual reality in the very low light. He will often fire a flash that does nothing more than put a twinkle in the eyes of his subjects.

slightly greater, so that even when working at wide lens apertures, it may be difficult to separate the subject from the background. This is particularly true when working outdoors, where patches of sunlight or other distracting background elements can easily detract from the subjects.

When making group portraits, you are often forced to use a wide-angle lens. The background problems discussed above can be even more pronounced, but using a wide-angle lens is often the only way you can fit the entire group into the shot and still maintain a decent working distance. For this reason, many expert group photographers carry a stepladder or scope out the location in advance to find a high vantage point, if necessary.

FOCUS

Depth of Field. The closer you are to your subjects, the less depth of field you will have, at any given aperture. When you are shooting a tight image of faces, be sure that

you have enough depth of field at your working lens aperture to hold the focus fully on the subjects' faces.

Another thing to remember is that medium-format lenses have less depth of field than 35mm lenses. A 50mm lens on a 35mm camera will yield more depth of field than a 75mm lens on a medium-format camera, even if the lens apertures and subject distances are the same. This is important because many photographers feel that if they go to a larger format, they will improve the quality of their portraits. This is true in that the image will appear improved simply by the increase in film size; however, focusing becomes much more critical with the larger format.

Learn to use your lens's depth-of-field scale. The viewfinder screen is often too dim when the lens is stopped down with the depth-of-field preview to accurately gauge overall image sharpness. Learn to read the scale quickly and practice measuring distances mentally. Better yet, learn the characteristics of your lenses. You should know what to expect, sharpness- and depth-of-field-wise, at your most frequently used lens apertures, which for most group shots will be f/5.6, f/8, and f/11.

If shooting digitally, check the sharpness of your images on the camera's LCD screen. Most DSLRs allow you to enlarge your images and scroll across them to examine each area in detail.

The most difficult type of portrait to focus precisely is a close-up portrait. It is important that the eyes and frontal planes of all the faces in the group be tack-sharp. It is usually desirable for the ears to be sharp as well, but it is not always possible.

When working at wide lens apertures where depth of field is reduced, you must focus carefully to hold the eyes, lips, and tip of the nose in focus. This is where a good working knowledge of your lenses is essential. Some lenses will have the majority of their depth of field behind the point of focus; others will have the majority of their depth of field in front of the point of focus. In most cases, the depth of field is split about 50–50—half in front of and half behind the point of focus. It is important that you know how your different focal length lenses operate. It is also important to check the depth of field with the lens stopped down to your taking aperture, using your camera's depth-of-field preview control or LCD. As a rule of thumb, with most lenses, if you focus one third of the way

into the group or scene, it will ensure optimum depth of field at all but the widest apertures.

Focusing a $\frac{3}{4}$ - or full-length portrait is a little easier because you are farther from the subjects, where depth of field is greater. Again, you should split your focus, halfway between the forward-most and farthest points that you want sharp on the subject. And again, because of background problems, it is a good idea to work at wide apertures to keep your background moderately soft.

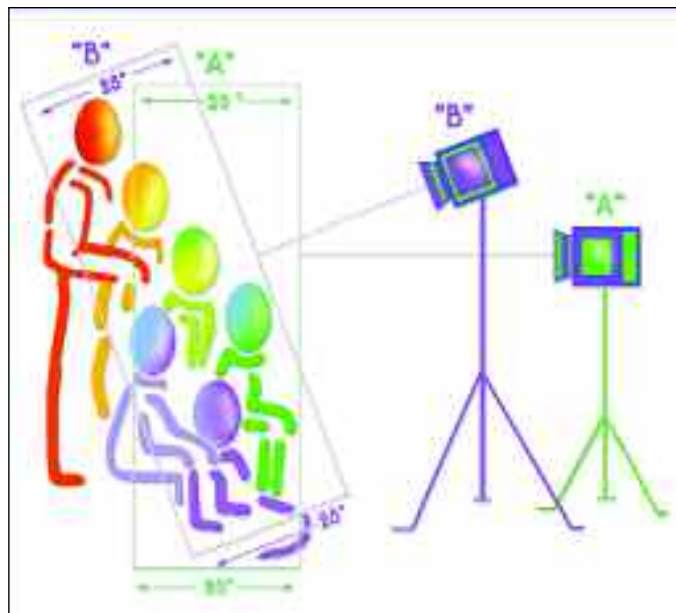
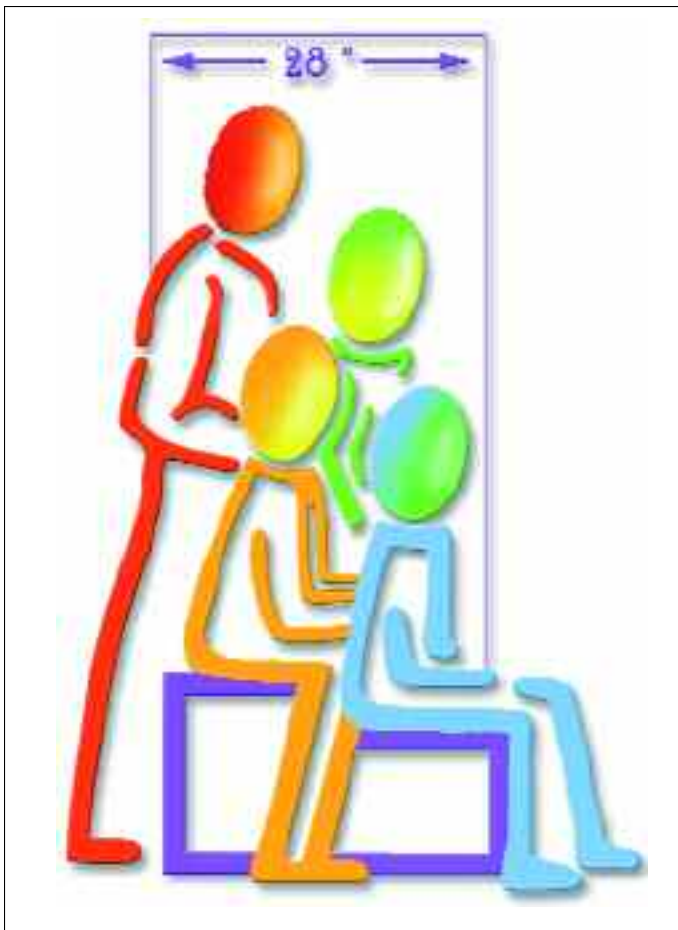
It is also essential for groups of two or more that the faces fall in the same focusing plane. This is accomplished with posing and careful maneuvering of your subjects or your camera position. If one or more of the people in the group is out of focus, the portrait will be flawed.

Shifting the Focus Point. Once you have determined the depth of field for a specific lens at a given focusing distance and taking aperture (by examining the lens's depth-of-field scale or LCD), you have a range in which you can capture all of your subjects sharply. For example, at a subject-to-camera distance of 10 feet, an 80mm lens set to $f/8$ will, hypothetically, produce depth of field stretching from 10 feet to 12 feet, 4 inches, producing an

effective depth of field of roughly 28 inches. By shifting the focus point to within that region, you can effectively expand the range of focus to perhaps 36 inches. What does all this mean? It means that in this example you must place all of your subjects within that 28–36-inch plane at $f/8$ for all of your subjects to be sharp.

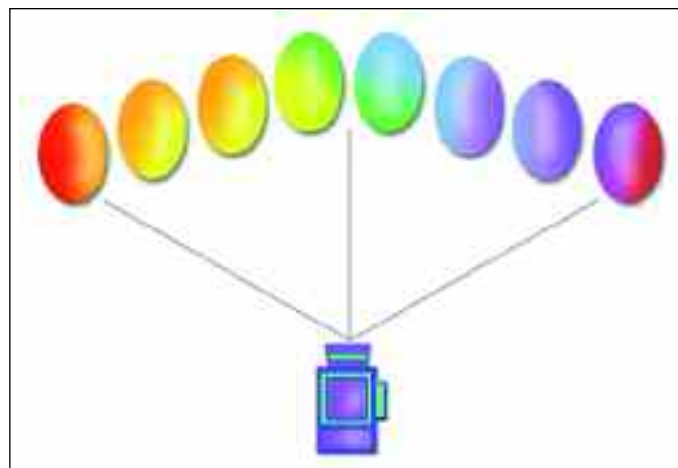
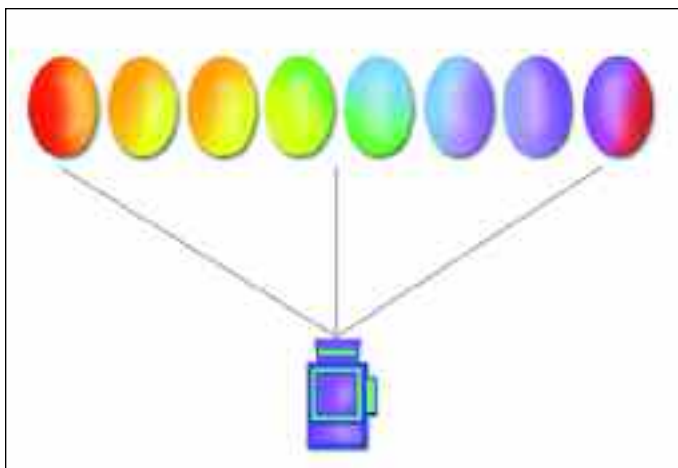
The above example is critical for photographing groups because you must modify the poses of each person in the group to accommodate that narrow zone of focus, which, in this example, is 28–36 inches. As seen in the diagram shown below, subjects in the back of the group can lean in and subjects at the front of the group can lean back slightly so that all of your subjects fall within that plane of focus.

Plane of Focus. Suppose your group is bigger than the one pictured above and you have no more room in which to make the portrait. One solution is to raise the camera height, angling the camera downward so that the film plane is more parallel to the plane of the group. You have not changed the amount of depth of field that exists at that distance and lens aperture—it is still only 28–36 inches, as in the above example, but you have optimized the plane of focus to accommodate that same 28–36-inch range.



LEFT—Subjects in the back of the group can lean in and subjects at the front of the group can lean back slightly so that all of your subjects fall within one plane. Diagram concept courtesy of Norman Phillips.

ABOVE—To include additional subjects in the same amount of space, raise the camera height, angling the camera downward so that the film plane is more parallel to the plane of the group. Diagram concept courtesy of Norman Phillips.



When a straight-line group is configured in front of the camera lens, the subjects directly in front of the lens will be closest to the camera lens. Those at the ends of the group will be a greater distance away from the lens. By “bowing” the group (having the centermost people take a step back, the outermost people take a step forward, and everyone in between adjust), all subjects will be equidistant from the lens, and focus will be a snap, even at wider apertures. Diagram concept courtesy of Norman Phillips.

Shifting the Field of Focus. Lenses will characteristically focus objects in a somewhat straight, but not completely straight line. If you line your subjects up in a straight line and back up so that you are roughly 25–30 feet or more away from the group, all subjects will be rendered sharply at almost any aperture. The problem is that at a distance, subjects become unrecognizable, so you must move closer to the group, making those at the ends of the group farther away from the lens than those in the

middle of the lineup. Those farthest from the lens may be difficult to keep in focus. The solution, simply, is to “bow” the group, making the middle of the group step back and the ends of the group step forward so that all the members of the group are the same relative distance from the camera. To the camera, the group looks like a straight line, but you have actually distorted the plane of sharpness to accommodate the group.

Once you begin to see the group portrait in terms of



In Jennifer George Walker’s San Diego north-light studio, good camera technique is a requirement, since she often shoots by only the soft available window light. You can see that she did two ingenious things to make the subject plane more parallel to the film plane of her camera. First, she raised the camera so that she was slightly above her subjects. Secondly, she arranged her subjects so that their faces were in line with the camera plane. Both things let her increase shutter speed while working at a wide taking aperture to accommodate the low light.

planes of focus, you will soon get the hang of controlling the planes of sharpness. As in the above examples, keeping the film plane parallel to the plane of the group, it is necessary to raise the camera each time another row is added in the back. This also keeps the image perspective in check. Otherwise, the people up front appear too large, while the people in the back rows appear too small.

Another school of thought says to establish one or more planes in which to place individuals in the group. These planes will make it simpler for you to finalize your lighting and allow you to include everyone within the lens’s range of focus. Sometimes a setting such as a staircase or a gentle sloping hillside can provide a natural organization of planes.

METERING AND EXPOSURE

Because exposure is so critical to producing fine portraits, it is essential to meter the scene properly. Using an in-camera light meter may not always give you consistent and accurate results. Even with sophisticated multi-zone in-camera reflectance meters, brightness patterns can influence the all-important skin tones. Usually in-camera meters are center-weighted because that's where most people place their subjects within the frame. The problem arises from the meter's function, which is to average all of the brightness values that it sees to produce a generally acceptable exposure. Put more succinctly, the in-camera meter wants to turn everything it sees into 18 percent (middle) gray. This is rather dark even for well-suntanned or dark-skinned individuals. So, if using the in-camera meter, take a meter reading from an 18 percent gray card held in front of the subjects, large enough to fill most of the frame. If using a handheld reflected-type meter, do the same thing—take a reading from an 18 percent gray card or a surface that approximates 18 percent reflectance. This is not always practical, however.

The preferred type of meter for portraiture is the handheld incident light meter. This does not measure the reflectance of the subjects, but instead measures the amount of light falling on the scene. Simply stand where you want your subjects to be, point the hemisphere (dome) of the meter directly at the camera lens, and take a reading. This type of meter yields extremely consistent results because it measures the light falling on the subjects rather than the light reflected from the subjects. It is less likely to be influenced by highly reflective or light-absorbing surfaces.

TOP—For this large group, Robert Love and Suzanne Love shifted the plane of focus by moving those in the center back and those on the ends closer to form a “bow,” creating the impression that all subjects are the same relative distance from the camera. This helps control the plane of focus when depth of field is at a minimum. Also note that the photographer had each subgroup dress in complementary colors, a technique that will be discussed in chapter 5. **BOTTOM**—Shooting at the lens's optimum aperture produces the maximum sharpness and image contrast. Such is the case in this image, where Bill McIntosh used the afternoon light to rim light his young subjects. He fired a flash at the same lens aperture as the daylight reading to provide perfect fill-in on the subjects and split-rail fence. He used a Mamiya RZ 67, a 150mm f/3.5 lens, and an exposure of $\frac{1}{125}$ second at f/5.6. Notice that in this portrait, Bill employed one of the most graceful design elements in all of art, the sweeping S curve, here formed by the winding path behind the sisters.

Incident Flashmeters. The ultimate meter for groups, especially outdoor groups, is the handheld incident flashmeter, which also reads ambient light. There are a number of models available, but they all allow you to meter both the ambient light at the subject, and the flash output, again, at the subject position. The problem is that you either need to have someone trip the strobe for you





This is a photograph that is a depth-of-field tour de force. The photographer, Al Gordon, wanted to create a portrait that incorporated the foreground (which included the piano and pianist) as well as the background (which included the far bridesmaid), with the bride as the central element of the composition. By splitting his focus in the middle and carefully choosing a camera distance that would accommodate all three zones with a moderate wide-angle lens, he was able to achieve this remarkable image. By the way, it was made by available window light and room light from the hotel candelabras and chandeliers. Al had a softbox right next to him that went unused.

while you hold the meter, or have the subject hold the meter while you trip the strobe to get a reading. You can also attach a PC cord to the meter and trigger the strobe that way, but PC cords can be problematic, particularly when there are children running around. Sooner or later, with weddings and other large groups, somebody is going to trip over the PC cord, pulling the flash, light stand, and umbrella down as well.

Optimum Shooting Apertures. Choosing the working lens aperture is often a function of exposure level. In other words, you often don't have much of a choice in the aperture you select, particularly when depth of field for large or deep (front to back) groups is concerned.

Experts in optics design suggest choosing an aperture that is $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 full f-stops smaller than the lens's maximum aperture. For instance, the optimum lens aperture of an f/2 lens would be around f/4. Theoretically, this is the sharpest lens aperture at which the lens can be used. Conversely, avoid the minimum lens apertures—f/16 or f/22—because they suffer slight loss of sharpness due to diffraction. Again, the ability to choose an aperture is

optimum. More often, the considerations of your group take precedence where aperture selection is concerned.

A lens used wide open (at its maximum aperture) theoretically suffers from spherical aberration; a lens at its smallest apertures suffers from diffraction. Both of these conditions reduce the overall sharpness of the recorded image to a slight degree. Even though at the smaller apertures the lens may produce greater depth of field, the image is still sharpest at or near its optimum aperture— $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 stops from wide open.

Some photographers choose an aperture that they prefer over all others for groups. Norman Phillips, for instance, prefers f/8 to f/11, even though f/11 affords substantially more depth of field than f/8. He prefers the relationship between the sharply focused subject and the background at f/8, saying that the subjects at f/11 look "chiseled out of stone." So for Phillips, at least, the optimum aperture is f/8, regardless of lens-sharpness characteristics and depth-of-field considerations.

Shutter Speeds. You should choose a shutter speed that stills both camera and subject movement. If you are

using a tripod, $\frac{1}{30}$ to $\frac{1}{60}$ second should be adequate to stop average subject movement. If you are using electronic flash, you are locked into the flash sync speed your camera calls for unless you are “dragging” the shutter (working at a slower than flash-sync speed to bring up the level of the ambient light). This effectively creates a balanced flash exposure with the ambient-light exposure.

When working outdoors, you should generally choose a shutter speed faster than $\frac{1}{60}$ second because slight breezes can cause the subjects’ hair to flutter, producing motion during the moment of exposure.

If you are handholding the camera, the general rule of thumb is to use the reciprocal of the focal length lens you are using for a shutter speed. For example, if using a 100mm lens, use $\frac{1}{100}$ second (or the next highest equivalent shutter speed, like $\frac{1}{125}$ second) under average conditions. If you are very close to the subjects, as you might be when making a portrait of a couple, you will need to use a faster shutter speed. When farther away from the subject, you can revert to the shutter speed that is the reciprocal of your lens’s focal length. You need to employ a faster shutter speed when using higher image magnifications.

One of the great technical improvements is the development of image-stabilization lenses. These lenses optomechanically correct for camera movement and allow you to shoot handheld with long lenses and relatively slow shutter speeds. Canon and Nikon, two companies that currently offer this feature in their lenses, offer a wide variety of zooms and long focal length lenses with image stabilization. If using a zoom, for instance, which has a maximum aperture of $f/4$, you can still shoot handheld wide open in subdued light at $\frac{1}{10}$ or $\frac{1}{15}$ second and get dramatically sharp results. The benefit is that you can use the light

longer in the day and still shoot with higher resolution ISO 100 and 400 speed films or the equivalent digital ISO settings.

When shooting groups in action, use a faster shutter speed and a wider lens aperture. It’s more important to freeze subject movement than it is to have great depth of field for this kind of shot. If you have any questions as to which speed to use, always use the next fastest speed to ensure sharper images.

Bill McIntosh, a superb environmental group portrait photographer, will choose shutter speeds that are impossibly long. He works with strobe and often lights various parts of large rooms with multiple strobes. Some of the strobes may be way off in the distance, triggered by radio remotes synced to the shutter release. In order to balance the background strobes with the ambient light in the room and the light on the subject, he often has to reduce



“Dragging the shutter,” or shooting at a slower shutter speed than the flash sync speed of the camera, allows you to capture the ambient light in your scene. In this image, the photographer was primarily concerned with the rich desert sky at sunset. The flash output was adjusted to produce the same aperture, but the long shutter speed allowed the sky to be rendered colorfully. Note the position of the diffused flash—above and off camera by about 45 degrees for the best modeling. Photograph by Kenneth Sklute.



The sun had been down five minutes and it was getting dark quickly. The photographer matched the ambient light exposure, $\frac{1}{8}$ second at $f/8$, with the Lumedyne barebulb strobe at $f/8$. This photographer routinely works at ultraslow shutter speeds like $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$ second. Bill McIntosh used a Mamiya RZ 67 with a 65mm lens and Fuji NHG II 800 film to create this image.

the intensity of the light on the subject to incorporate all these other elements, and consequently ends up shooting at speeds as long as $\frac{1}{4}$ second. For the inexperienced, shooting groups at these shutter speeds is an invitation to disaster, yet McIntosh routinely does it with incredible results.

REMOTE TRIGGERING DEVICES

Strobes can be fired remotely with a wireless triggering device. These devices use transmitters and receivers to send and receive signals to the flash or flashes that are part of the system. There are several types of wireless triggering devices. Optical slaves work with bursts of light, such as that from a single electronic flash. The other

lights, equipped with optical receivers, sense the pulse of flash and fire at literally the same instant.

Radio slaves send radio signals in either analog or digital form. Digital systems can be used almost anywhere and they aren't adversely affected by nearby radio transmissions. For a completely wireless setup you can use a separate wireless transmitter for the handheld flashmeter. This allows you the ultimate in cordless metering, since you can meter the ambient and flash exposures from the subject position without the need of an assistant or PC cord. The unit fires the flash or multiple flashes wirelessly, in a similar manner to the transmitter on the camera.

[3]

POSING

When more than one person is pictured in a portrait, the traditional rules of portraiture, dating back to Greek civilization and refined throughout the centuries, have to be bent, if not shattered completely. As one noted portrait photographer, Norman Phillips, says, “The most important concern in building groups is to be sure they are in focus and properly lighted.”

In traditional portraiture of a single person, the fundamental posing and composition help define the character of the image. In a group portrait, it is the design created by more than one person that helps to define the image. As you will see, there are a number of tricks at play that you probably have never noticed.

SUBJECT POSITIONING

When “designing” groups, which may take some time, it is important that your subjects appear to feel comfortable. This is particularly true for large groups. Posing stools and benches allow the subject comfort and also provide good, upright posture. These are fine for studio work, but what about outdoors or on location? You must find a spot—a hillside or an outdoor chair, for example—that will be relatively comfortable for the duration of the session. This will help your posing to appear natural.

Heidi Mauracher masterfully rendered these delicate tones, which could only be preserved by precise exposure. The photographer previsualized how the columns in the foreground should be lighter than those in the receding hallway, by using fill flash, which would also lower the lighting ratio on the faces. She held the difficult dark tones of the clothing and the delicate specular highlights in the faces.

Poses should feel natural to the subject. If your subjects are to appear relaxed, then the poses must be not only natural to them, but typical.





HEAD-AND-SHOULDERS AXIS

One of the fundamentals of good portraiture is that the subjects' shoulders should be turned at an angle to the camera. When the shoulders face the camera straight on, it makes people look wider than they really are and can lead to a static composition.

Not only should the shoulders be at an angle, so should each subject's head. This is known as the head-and-shoulders axis, each having a different plane and angle. Technically speaking, these are imaginary lines running through shoulders (shoulder axis) and down the ridge of the nose (head axis). Head-and-shoulder axes should never be perpendicular to the line of the lens axis.

With men, the head is more often turned the same direction as the shoulders, but not necessarily to the same degree. With women, the head is often at a slightly different and opposing angle.

One of the by-products of good posing is the introduction of dynamic lines into the composition. The line of the shoulders now forms a diagonal line, while the line of the head creates a different dynamic line.



LEFT—Everyone in a group portrait should look great! Dennis Orchard created this colorful bridal formal in very tight quarters. With a high ceiling and bright backlighting, about all the photographer could do to balance the powerful backlighting was to fire a strobe straight in on the group. As you can see, he had their attention, and each one of the sixteen people in the photo looks great. Sometimes the photographer's role is that of entertainer to elicit expressions such as these. **ABOVE**—One of the basic techniques of group portraiture is to position your subjects at different levels to produce dynamic lines within the composition. A posing bench, such as this homemade one by photographer Michael Ayers, is ideal for outdoor posing where people often don't want to be posed directly on the ground. It seats five—one on each seat and one on each armrest. Six more can stand behind the bench with more seated in front. Photograph by Michael Ayers.

HEAD POSITIONS

The $\frac{7}{8}$ View. There are three basic head positions in portraiture. The $\frac{7}{8}$ view is created when the subject is looking slightly away from the camera. If you consider the full face as a head-on type of "mug shot," then the $\frac{7}{8}$ view is when the subject's face is turned just slightly away from the camera. In other words, you will see a little more of one side of the face. You will still see the subject's far ear in a $\frac{7}{8}$ view.

The $\frac{3}{4}$ View. This is when the far ear is hidden from the camera and more of one side of the face is visible. With this pose, the far eye will appear smaller because it is farther away from the camera than the near eye. It is important when posing subjects in a $\frac{3}{4}$ view to position them so that the smallest eye (people usually have one eye that is slightly smaller than the other) is closest to the camera. This way both eyes appear, perspective-wise, the same size in the photograph.

Profiles. In the profile, the head is turned almost 90 degrees to the camera. Only one eye is visible. In posing your subjects in a profile position, have them turn their

heads gradually away from the camera position just until the far eye and eyelashes disappear from view. If the subject has exceptionally long eyelashes, they will still show up, even when the head is turned 90 degrees or more.

Knowing the different head positions will help you provide variety and flow to your group designs. You may, at times, end up using all three head positions in a single group portrait. The more people in the group, the more likely that becomes. Additionally, keep in mind that, with all three of these head poses, the shoulders should be at an angle to the camera.

TILTING THE HEAD

Each subject's head should be tilted at a slight angle in literally every portrait. By doing this, you slant the natural line of the person's eyes. When the head is not tilted, the implied line is straight and parallel to the bottom edge of the photograph, creating a repetitive, static line. By tilting the person's head right or left, the implied line becomes diagonal, making the pose more dynamic.

TOP—This is a great example of “casual” formal posing by Martin Schembri. In all but one instance—the bride and groom—each person is posed at a slightly different angle to the camera. Note that the heads are at different angles throughout, introducing dynamic lines throughout the composition. The bride and groom contrast the rest of the group by being posed more or less head-on. The photographer spread the group out loosely to fill the doorway of the church and shot in a panoramic aspect ratio so the image would cover two pages in the album. **BOTTOM**—David Worthington is an expert group photographer. Each group and subgroup within the family portrait has a connection with one another, and each person looks great. In evaluating the design of this portrait, you can see it is made up of five separate groups. To make the portrait asymmetrical and more visually interesting, the groups of kids were broken into groups of four and two, probably corresponding to whose family members they are. This imbalance gives the portrait a rhythm and flow. We're not quite sure whether the kids are trying to hear the adult conversations or if they've just seen a plane in the sky. Either way, the portrait is a charmer.

In men's portraits (this is controversial and not without its detractors), the rule is to tilt the head toward the far shoulder (the one farthest from the camera). In women's portraits, the head should be tipped toward the near shoulder for a supposedly feminine look. These rules are frequently broken, because individual subject characteristics and lighting usually determine whether the pose looks masculine or feminine.

For the most natural look, the tilt of the person's head should be slight and not overly exaggerated.

HEAD LEVELS AND PLACEMENT IN GROUPS

No two heads should ever be on the same level when next to each other, or directly on top of each other (with the exception of team photos, in which this positioning is





Varying the head height across a group portrait is a primary means of introducing visual interest in the image. Here the photographer, Fran Reisner, created two strong diagonal lines—one that runs from the boy's head through the mom and to the dog; the other from the father to the daughter. These lines are powerful and unify the portrait along diagonal lines. Every head height is different so that the viewer's eye goes from one face to the next, almost like musical notes on sheet music. Fran used Painter to enhance the background with broad brush strokes, creating a fantasy-like image.

standard). Not only should heads be on different levels but subjects should be as well. In a group of five people, you can have all five on a different level—for example: one seated, one standing to the left or right, one seated on the arm of the chair, one kneeling on the other side of the chair, one kneeling down in front with their weight on their calves. Always think in terms of multiple levels. This makes any group portrait more pleasing.

Monte Zucker, who composes very tight, intimate group portraits, has a slightly different take: "I try to never put two heads together at the same level, unless there's another person between them or above or below them."

Regarding proximity of one head to another, be consistent. Don't have two heads close together and two far

apart. There should be equal distance between each of the heads. If you have a situation where one person is seated, one standing, and a third seated on the arm of the chair (placing the two seated heads in close proximity), then back up and make the portrait a full-length. This minimizes the effect of the standing subject's head being so far from the others.

CHIN HEIGHT

Be aware of the effects of too high or too low a chin height. If the chin is too high, the pose is "snooty." If the chin height is too low, the neck will look compressed, or worse, like the person has no neck at all. A medium chin height is, quite obviously, recommended.

EXPRESSIONS AND COMMUNICATION

Eyes. The best way to keep your subjects' eyes active and alive is to engage them in conversation. Look up often while you are setting up and try to find a common frame of interest. Ask questions that might interest any or all members of the group. If the group is uncomfortable or nervous, you have to intensify your efforts to help them get relaxed and comfortable. It's all about trust. If your

subjects trust that you know what you're doing and you're a professional, your job will be easy. Try a variety of conversational topics until you find one they warm up to and then pursue it. As you gain their interest, you will take their minds off of the session.

The direction in which the group is looking is important. Start the portrait session by having the group look at you. Using a cable release with the camera tripod-mount-



There is more to the posing rule, “no two heads should be on the same level!” than simply adjusting the head heights of your subjects so that all are different. The placement of faces should form a pleasing pattern that provides visual direction and keeps the viewer’s eye wandering through the image. The photographer created a beautiful flowing diagonal line that follows the mom’s right arm up through the topmost faces and down to the sister’s face, where another sweeping diagonal line takes you down to the mom’s hands, where the visual voyage starts again. Very subtle design is at work here, but it is one reason why this portrait is so interesting. Photograph by Heidi Mauracher.

ed forces you to become a “host” and allows you to physically hold the group’s attention. It is a good idea to shoot a few shots of the group looking directly into the camera, but most people will appreciate some variety. Looking into the lens for too long will bore your subjects.

One of the best ways to enliven a group’s eyes is to tell an amusing story. If the clients enjoy it, their eyes will

smile. This is one of the most endearing expressions a human being can make.

When photographing groups of any size, you will undoubtedly get some “blinkers.” Be on the lookout, and if you suspect one of the group members blinked during the exposure, they probably did. This problem gets worse as the group gets larger. To combat this problem, photog-

rapher Kathleen Hawkins has her group subjects look down and then look up at the count of three. All this is done with the groups’ eyes wide open and it seems to work.

Also crucial in tightly packed groups is the ability of the lens to “see” the entire face of each subject. This is especially true with kids who will hide behind their mom or big sister so the camera can only see one eye. The best tip is to tell the group, “Make sure you can see the camera with both eyes.” If they can, you’ll get full faces in your group portraits.

Mouths. It is a good idea to shoot a variety of portraits, some smiling, some serious—or at least not smiling. People are self-conscious about their teeth and mouths. If you see that your group has attractive smiles, make plenty of exposures.

One of the best ways to create natural smiles is to praise your subjects. Tell them how good they look and how much you like a certain feature of theirs. Simply to



TOP—The eyes are the focal point of this lovely portrait. The photographer created a dynamic image by letting the diagonal line of the eyes dictate the flow and cropping of the portrait. Notice too that the eyes of the subjects are engaged and lively, as if the photographer just told them something amusing. Photograph by David Anthony Williams. **BOTTOM**—The bigger the group, the more difficult it is to animate all the members at the same time. This is compounded when there are children in the portrait, since what amuses kids might not amuse adults. Notice the lack of tension in all four mouths. All are relaxed and look fantastic. A strong diagonal forms the base of the portrait, and the family is decidedly color-coordinated, a trademark of this photographer. Photograph by Bill McIntosh.



This is an extremely well-posed and lighted three-quarter-length portrait by Ray Prevost. Ordinarily, you would not photograph a couple from below chin height because you would exaggerate the width of the chin and show the skin on the neck. However, because of the soft core of spot lighting from above, the area under the chins is in full shadow. The photographer also used a long enough lens so that perspective appears normal. Ray darkened all but the area within the core of light in Photoshop, giving the portrait a mysterious feeling. Notice how the man's hands are expertly posed, revealing strength and character.

say "smile" will produce that lifeless, "say cheese" type of portrait. By sincere confidence-building and flattery you will get the group to smile naturally and sincerely, and their eyes will be engaged.

The mouth is nearly as expressive as the eyes. Pay close attention to your subjects' mouths to be sure there is no tension, which will give the portrait an unnatural, posed look. If you spot someone in the group who needs to relax, talk to him or her directly in a calm, positive manner. An air of relaxation relieves tension, so work to achieve that mood.

An area of the face where problems occasionally arise is the front-most part of the cheeks—the part of the face that creases when a person smiles. These are called laugh lines. Some people have very deep furrows that look unnaturally deep when they are photographed smiling. If the lines are severe, avoid a "big smile" type of pose.

CAMERA HEIGHT AND PERSPECTIVE

When photographing groups, there are a few general rules that govern camera height in relation to the subjects. These rules will produce normal perspective.



LEFT—For full-length portraits, the rule of thumb is that camera height should be at roughly the chest height of the tallest member of the group, which it is here. Note, too, that the easy flow of the couple's gate gives the image a sophistication not unlike what one would see in the finest bridal magazines. Photograph by Becker. **RIGHT**—Melanie Maganias Nashan photographed these beautiful young bridesmaids against a weathered barn door. She used a 70mm focal length on a Canon D60 and positioned the camera height just below the girls' head height for good perspective. Note, when photographing children (or models) it's okay to photograph them head-on with shoulders square to the camera. Such subjects tend to have thin frames, and this type of pose does not add size in a way that is objectionable.



For small groups being photographed close-up, the rule of thumb is that camera height should be parallel to the middle face in the grouping. For $\frac{3}{4}$ -length portraits, the camera should be at a height approximately midway between the waists and necks of the subjects. In full-length portraits, the camera should be at around chest height of the tallest subject.

In each case, the camera is at a height that divides the subjects into two equal halves in the viewfinder. This is so that the features above and below the lens-subject axis are the same distance from the lens, and thus recede equally for "normal" perspective. As you will see, when the camera is raised or lowered, the perspective (the size relationship between parts of the photo) changes. Raise the camera and feet get smaller. Lower the camera and

heads get smaller. By controlling perspective, you will not only render your subjects more faithfully, you will instill a visual logic into the picture that the viewer finds subliminally reassuring.

POSING HANDS

Hands can be a problem in small groups. Despite their small size, they attract attention to themselves, particularly against dark clothing. They can be especially problematic in seated groups, where at first glance you might think there are more hands than there should be for the number of people pictured. This makes it a good idea to hide as many hands as you can. For men, have them put their hands in their pockets; for women, try to hide their hands in their laps. Flowers, hats, and other people can

also be used to hide hands in group portraits. Be aware of these potentially distracting elements and look for them as part of your visual inspection of the frame before you make the exposure.

If you are photographing a man, folding the arms across his chest is a good, strong pose. Have the man turn his hands slightly inward, so the edge of the hand is more prominent than the top (this gives a natural line to the photograph and eliminates the distortion that occurs when the hand is photographed from the top or head-on). In such a pose, have him lightly grasp his biceps—but not too hard, or it will look like he's cold. Also, remember to instruct the man to bring his folded arms out from his body a little bit. This slims the arms, which would otherwise be flattened against his body, making them and him appear larger.

Women's hands should look graceful. With a standing woman, one hand on a hip and the other at her side is a good standard pose. Don't let the free hand dangle. Instead, have her turn the hand so that the outer edge shows to the camera. Try to "break" the wrist, meaning to raise the wrist slightly so there is a smooth

bend and gently curving line where the wrist and hand join. This is particularly important with women whose hands are small, since the "break" in the wrist gives the hand dimension.



TOP—The late Don Blair was "old school." He could photograph hands the way they were meant to be photographed, with the sensitivity and discipline of the old masters. Here, Don photographed Canadian master photographers Joseph and Louise Simone. Notice the delicate, perfect posing of each hand, shown from the side to reveal texture and dimension. Louise's drawing hand is prominent, as is Joseph's pipe-holding hand, which is strong and masculine. Louise hand-draws many of the backgrounds the couple uses in their portraiture. The image is then used as a slide with the Scene Machine, a background projection system. **BOTTOM**—The arch is a powerful graphic element in a portrait. The repeating arch is even more dominant. The photographer, Elizabeth Homan, decided to mimic the arch in her pose, which is really three groups linked by the family in the middle. Notice how Elizabeth arranged the head heights to match the shape of the overhead arches. She also had the families dress in black and white to fully contrast the monochrome arches.







FACING PAGE—Here is a portrait done by Joseph and Louise Simone that is made more dramatic by the effective posing of the mother's and son's hands. The key light that highlights the boy's face also lights the top of the mother's hand, skimming across the skin to reveal texture and form. The son's hand, much smaller and less dominant than the mother's, is secondary, but the connection forms the basis for this powerful portrait. **ABOVE**—Posing a medium-sized group can be difficult, but it can be fun when simple direction is offered. Here, Dennis Orchard had his group collapse on the bride, bringing the group forward and creating a semicircular shape around her. British groups are often exaggerated as the participants like to "ham it up" for the camera, but as you can see, everyone looks good and is animated and having a great time.

In all types of portraiture, a general rule is to show all of the hand or none of it. Don't allow a thumb or half a hand or a few fingers to show. Additionally, you should avoid photographing subjects with their hands pointing straight into the camera lens. This distorts the size and shape of the hands. Instead, have the hands at an angle to the lens. Finally, try to photograph the fingers with a slight separation in between them. This gives the fingers form and definition. When the fingers are closed tightly together they appear two-dimensional.

USING $\frac{3}{4}$ - AND FULL-LENGTH POSES

As you probably understand by now, the more of the human anatomy you include in a portrait, the more problems you encounter. When you photograph a group in a $\frac{3}{4}$ - or full-length pose, you have arms, legs, feet, and the total image of the body to contend with.

A $\frac{3}{4}$ -length portrait is one that shows the subjects from the head down to a region below the waist. This type of portrait is usually best composed by having the bottom of the picture be mid-thigh or below the knee and above the ankles. Never break the portrait at a joint, as this has a negative (though subconscious) psychological impact.

You should always have the subjects facing one direction or another, usually at a 30- to 45-degree angle to the camera. Additionally, you should have the subjects put their weight on their back feet, rather than distributing their weight evenly on both feet or worse yet, on their front foot. There should be a slight bend in the front knee if a person is standing. This helps break up the static line of a straight leg. The back leg can remain straight.

Have the feet pointing at an angle to the camera. Just as it is undesirable to have the hands facing the lens head-on, so it is with the feet, but even more so. Feet tend



This an exceptionally well executed formal large-group portrait. Even lighting was accomplished with studio strobes bounced off the ceiling near the camera and aimed at the group so that the lighting would be frontal but not too overhead. The posing is exemplary. The women's legs are in the "tuck" position for good perspective, and the men's hands are posed in a relaxed, masculine way. Note too that the hands of the back row are mostly hidden from view. The back row is fanned so that all of the bodies face inward toward the center. Photograph by Michael Ayers.

to look stumpy, large, and very unattractive when photographed head-on.

When subjects are sitting, a cross-legged pose is sometimes desirable. Have the top leg facing at an angle and not pointing into the camera lens. With a woman who is sitting cross-legged, it is a particularly good idea to have her tuck the calf of the front leg in behind the back leg. This reduces the size of the calves, since the back leg, which is farther from the camera, becomes the most prominent visually. Always have a slight space between the leg and the chair, when possible, as this will slim thighs and calves. And don't allow seated subjects to sit back in the chair with their lower back in contact with the chair back. This thickens the person, especially the torso.

The subjects' arms should never be allowed to fall to their sides but should project outward to provide gently sloping lines that form a "base" to the composition. This

is achieved by making subjects aware that there should be a slight space between their upper arms and torsos. This triangular base attracts the viewer's eye upward, toward the subjects' face. This little trick of keeping the arms apart from the torso also helps the arms look well defined and slender, which is particularly important to women.

As you will see, the seated pose is often the cornerstone of the small group. A mother or grandmother is often seated at the center of the group, and the rest of the group is designed around her.

It should be noted that in any discussion of subject posing, the two most important points are that the poses appear natural (one that the people would typically fall into) and that the subjects' features be undistorted. If the pose is natural and the features look normal, perspective-wise, then you have achieved your goal, and the portrait will be pleasing to you and the subject.

[4]

COMPOSITION

Composition for groups is much different than composition for individual portraits. The rules remain the same, but the difference is that a member or several members of the group become the primary areas of interest. For example, the grandparents in a family portrait, or the bride and groom in a wedding group are the main centers of

interest and, as such, should occupy a prime location within the portrait's composition.

THE RULE OF THIRDS

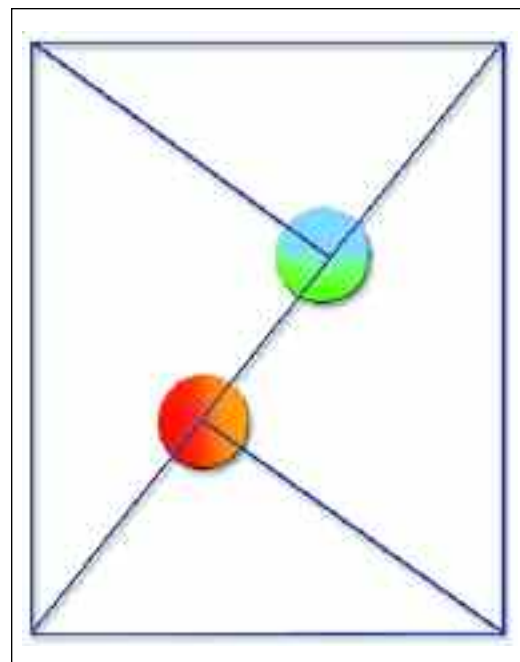
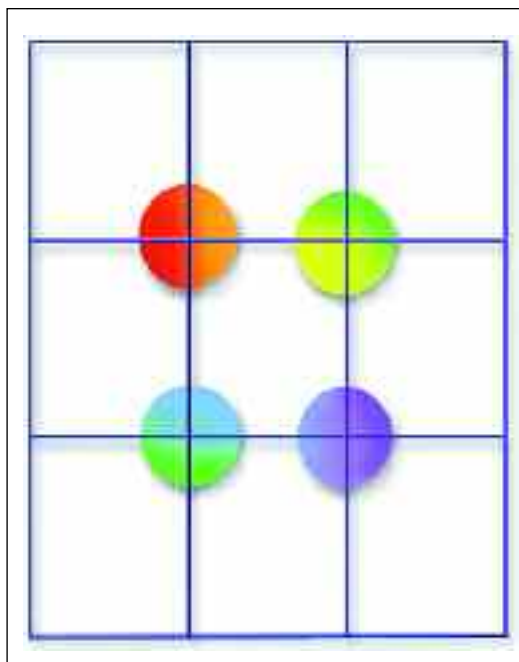
One of the basics in image composition is the rule of thirds. The rectangular viewing area is cut into nine separate squares by four lines. Where any two lines intersect is an area of dynamic visual interest. The intersecting points are ideal spots to position the main subjects in the group.

The main point of interest does not necessarily have to fall at an intersection of two lines. It could also be placed anywhere along one of the dividing lines.

This is a flawless bridal portrait. The gentle diagonals in the bride's pose and the flowing folds of her wedding dress contrast the stark, imposing vertical lines of the massive stone columns—a good example of tension and balance. Although the couple is positioned dead center in the frame, they are located within the more interesting lower third of the image. The receding columns give a sense of motion, and by virtue of the stark contrast between the columns and the black and white bridal attire, the couple becomes the heightened center of interest. Photograph by Rick Ferro.



The rule of thirds (left) and the golden mean (right) are two useful ways of designing more dynamic compositions in your group portrait photography. In each case, the center of interest should be placed on or near an intersection of two of the lines that are superimposed over the frame. Examine the portraits in this chapter and see if you can find the intersections within the frame where the centers of interest lie.



Nothing in this award-winning composition is extraneous. In this portrait of modern-day cowboys, the men on either end of the group are angled and posed to turn the eye in toward the center. The angle of the rifle, a crisp diagonal, directs the eye up toward the next group. The color red unifies the composition, and the expressions of the men are timelessly stoic. The perfectly straight horizontal and vertical lines are balanced with the angled poses of each of the group members. Photograph by Frank Frost.



This family portrait was made late in the day. The path they're on, lined in yellow flowers, subtly defines one third of the print. The purple asters on the left are secondary point of interest. Both centers of interest are on rule-of-thirds lines for a pleasing composition. Hasselblad with 80mm lens, Fuji MPN film exposed for $\frac{1}{30}$ second at f/8. Photograph by Frank Frost.

In close-up group portraits, the eyes are the areas of central interest. Therefore, it's wise to position the subject's eyes on a dividing line or at an intersection of two lines.

In a $\frac{3}{4}$ - or full-length portrait, the faces are the centers of interest; thus the primary subject's face should be positioned to fall on an intersection or on a dividing line. This is important, because if it is a portrait of a bride and groom, the bride should be configured prominently.

In doing environmental portraiture, where the surroundings play a big part in the design of the image, the

rule of thirds is crucial to use for placing primary and secondary points of interest.

THE GOLDEN MEAN

The golden mean represents the point where the main center of interest should lie, and it is an ideal compositional type for portraits, whether individual or group. The golden mean is found by drawing a diagonal from one corner of the frame to the other. A second line is then drawn from one or both of the remaining corners so that it intersects the first line perpendicularly. By doing this,



The design of this engagement portrait is flawless. The stand of trees in the upper left occupies one of the intersections of the rule of thirds. The line of the white rocks meanders up and through the image in a flowing diagonal, as does the stream. Natural backlight with no fill was used along with a Mamiya RB 67 with 65mm lens. The “edging” was done with the photographer’s own soft-edge filter in printing. Photograph by Bill Duncan.

you can determine the proportions of the golden mean for either horizontal or vertical photographs.

LINE, FORM, AND DIRECTION

As you will see, designing groups depends on your sensibility of the intangible: those implied lines and shapes in a composition.

Line. A line is an artistic element used to create visual motion within the portrait. It may be implied by the arrangement of the group, or inferred, by grouping various elements within the scene. The photographer must

be able to recognize real and implied lines within the photograph.

A real line is one that is obvious—a horizon line, for example. An implied line is one that is not as obvious; the curve of the wrist or the bend of an arm is an implied line. Real lines should not cut the photograph into halves. It is better to locate these at one-third points within the photograph.

Implied lines, like the arms and legs of the group, should not contradict the direction or emphasis of the composition but should modify it. These lines should

provide gentle, not dramatic changes in direction, and again, they should lead to the main point of interest.

Lines that meet the edge of the photograph—real or implied—should lead the eye into the scene and not out of it, and they should lead toward the subject. A good example of this is the country road that is widest in the foreground and narrows to a point where the subjects are walking. These lines lead the eye straight to the subjects.

Shapes. Shapes are groupings of like elements: diamond shapes, circles, pyramids, etc. Usually, it is a collection of faces that forms this type of pattern. Shapes are

used to produce pleasing designs within the composition that guide the eye through the picture.

Pleasing Compositional Forms. The S-shaped composition is perhaps the most pleasing of all compositions. The center of interest will fall on either a third line or a golden mean, but the remainder of the composition forms a gently sloping S shape that leads the viewer's eye through the photograph and to the main point of interest. The Z shape is a close relative to the S-shaped design.

Another pleasing form of composition is the L shape or inverted L shape, which is observed when the group's

In this very soft and beautiful portrait of a mother and child, not only is the placement of the subjects perfectly balanced on the golden mean, but there is great direction in the print. The purple flowers flow around the subjects, embracing them. And in the tall grass, you can see the traces of other curving trail lines above and below the group. All of these elements serve to enhance an already fine portrait. Photograph by Gary Fagan.





You might say this breaks the rule about groups. This group is in a straight line. None of the shoulders are turned; all face the camera. But what else is happening in this portrait? A wide sweeping S pattern follows the group from the rear of the composition, forcing your eye to follow the line and stop and examine each face in the group. Because the S curve is a recurring line, you repeat this process more than once as you look at this portrait. The spontaneity and joy in this photo match its keen design sense. Photograph by Anthony Cava.

form resembles the letter L or an inverted letter L. This type of composition is ideal for reclining or seated subjects. These compositional forms may encompass line alone or line and shape to accomplish the pattern.

Direction. Regardless of which direction the subjects are facing in the photograph, there should be slightly more room in front of the group on the side toward which they are facing. For instance, if the group is looking to the right as you look at the scene through the viewfinder, then there should be more space to the right side of the subject than to the left of the group in the frame. This gives a visual sense of direction. Even if the composition is such that you want to position the group very close to the center of the frame, there should still be slightly more space on the side toward which the group is turned.

At first, such an arrangement may seem to be a foreign concept, but the more you learn to recognize these ele-

ments, the more they will become an integral part of your group compositions.

As in any artistic venture, the goal of the group photographer is to provide visual direction and movement in the image, guiding the viewer's eye through the composition in an interesting way. The opposite of this is a static image, where no motion/direction is found and the viewer simply "recognizes" rather than enjoys all of the elements in the photo.

SUBJECT TONE

The eye is always drawn to the lightest part of a photograph. The rule of thumb is that light tones advance visually, and dark tones retreat. Therefore, elements in the picture that are lighter in tone than the subject will be distracting. Bright areas, particularly at the edges of the photograph, should be darkened either in printing, in the



Look at the elegant shapes found in this portrait. The elbows of the bride and little girl form a graceful pyramid. The wedding dress forms a secondary pyramid and acts as a horizontal base for the portrait. Both shapes are compelling, and the image is topped off with priceless expressions and timeless lighting. Photograph by Anthony Cava.

computer, or in-camera (by masking or vignetting) so that the viewer's eye is not drawn away from the subject.

There are portraits where the subject is the darkest part of the scene, such as in a high-key portrait with a white background. This is the same principle at work as above—the eye will travel to the region of greatest contrast in the image.

Regardless of whether the main subject is light or dark, it should dominate the rest of the photograph either by brightness or by contrast.

Whether an area is in focus or out of focus has a lot to do with determining the amount of visual emphasis it will receive. A light-colored background that is lighter than the group, but distinctly out of focus, will not necessarily detract from the group. It may, in fact, enhance and frame the group, keeping the viewer's eye centered on the subjects.

The same is true of foreground areas. Although it is a good idea to make them darker than your subject, sometimes you can't. If the foreground is out of focus, however, it will detract less from the group, which, hopefully, is sharp.

A technique that is becoming popular is to diffuse an area of the photograph you want to minimize or use to focus attention on your main center of interest. This is usually done in Photoshop by selecting the area and "feathering" it so that the diffusion effect diminishes the closer you get to the edge of the selection.

TENSION AND BALANCE

Once you begin to recognize real and implied lines and to incorporate shapes and curves into your group portraits, you need to become aware of the concepts of tension and balance. Tension, or visual contrast, is a state of imbalance in an image—a big sky and a small subject, for example, is a situation having visual tension. As you examine the photographs in this book and read the captions, you will hear these terms referred to often.

There are wonderful design elements at work in this portrait by Fran Reisner. First, the father and child are at a perfect intersecting point in the rule of thirds. Second, the pose creates a strong diagonal from the father's downward gaze to the child, who intersects the diagonal creating a unified and complete shape. The soft, warm light of twilight creates an emotional feel to the portrait and the father's large hands, which engulf the small child, make it appear as if the father has created a safe, wonderful place for the child—which no doubt he has.







Here is another beautiful portrait by Fran Reisner. The sisters are positioned to the left of center, moving into the frame, creating a sense of direction. They are positioned at one of the points of interest in the rule of thirds. The field of wheat, with its horizontal lines from foreground to horizon, contrasts the strong vertical shapes of the girls.

Although tension does not have to be “resolved” in an image, it works in tandem with the concept of balance. As you examine the photographs in this book and read the captions, you will hear these terms referred to often. For example, a group of four on one side of an image and two subjects on the other side of the frame produce visual tension. They contrast each other because they are different sizes and not necessarily symmetrical. But the photograph may be in a state of perfect visual balance by virtue of what falls between these two groups, or for some other reason. For instance, using the same example, these two

different groups could be resolved visually if the larger group is wearing dark clothes and the smaller group is wearing brighter clothes. The eye then sees the two groups as more or less equal—one group demands attention by virtue of its size, the other gains attention by virtue of its brightness.

These strategies are subjective to a large extent, but there is no question that the eye/brain reacts favorably to both balance and visual tension and they are active ingredients in great photography.

THE BASICS OF BUILDING GROUPS

There are a number of ways to look at designing groups. The first is a technical aspect. Design your group so that those posed in the back are as close as possible to those in the front. This ensures that your plane of focus will cover the front row as well as the back row. Ensuring such an arrangement is a good habit to get into if you want your groups to be sharply focused.

The second consideration in designing groups is aesthetic. You are building a design when creating a group portrait. Norman Phillips likens group design to a florist arranging flowers. He says, “Sometimes we might want a tight bouquet of faces. Other times we might want to arrange our subjects so that the group looks interesting apart from the dynamics of the people in the group.” In other words, sometimes the design itself can be what’s important.

A third consideration is proximity. How close do you want the members of the group to be? Phillips relates proximity to warmth and distance to elegance. If you open the group up, you have a lot more freedom to introduce flowing lines and shapes within the composition. On the other hand, a tightly arranged group where members are touching implies warmth and closeness.

POSING HIERARCHY

Is it more important to pose by age, importance, or by size? This is a question of considerable debate among group portrait photographers. Some advise photographers to concentrate on organizing the groups and sub-

groups into logical units. The reasoning is that these subgroups (such as the oldest son, his wife, and two kids) can be photographed separately at the same session, thus doubling sales. Also, the family is more cohesively arranged if organized by age (grandparents in the middle, with their children adjacent and the grandchildren and their families in the outer realms of the group). One can also arrange subjects by size within the subgroups for the most pleasing composition.

[A tightly arranged group where members are touching implies warmth and closeness.]

Many photographers feel that posing by size and shape creates by far the most interesting and attractively posed group portrait. This is certainly true for weddings, where groups, formal or informal, can be arranged in any number of ways as long as the bride and groom are center-most. This method also affords the photographer the



ABOVE—How closely to position each subject to another is a function of how you design the group. Separating your subjects so that you can create a pleasant array of lines and shapes makes for an elegant image such as this one. Here, the tiny ballerina is the focus of the portrait, and the others form an implied and very graceful circle around her. Notice too how the draped background supports the design of this image. Photograph by Norman Phillips. **LEFT**—Sometimes, as Norman Phillips likes to say, you might design the photo to attain a “tight bouquet of faces,” as was done here. These beautiful faces needed to be seen close up. Dressing them in black and only allowing one hand to show in the pose focuses the viewer’s attention on the faces. Although their eye and head height is identical, not something that you generally want to do, this arrangement effectively conveys the subjects’ closeness. Photograph by Norman Phillips.



most flexibility to hide and flatter individual members of the group.

Some photographers pose their groups from the center out. In the case of a family group, the grandparents or parents would be right in the middle. Other photographers prefer to pose their groups by defining the perimeters of the group (i.e., the frame edges, left and right), and then filling in the center with interesting groupings.

POSING DIALOGUE

It is always better to show than to tell your subjects how you want them to pose. Act out how you want the person to pose. It's much easier than describing what you want, and it takes less time. Once they're in the pose you want, wait for the special moment when they forget all about having their pictures taken. Then it's show time.

Always be positive and always be in charge. Once you lose control of a large group, regaining it is difficult or impossible.

Talk to your subjects and tell them how good they look and that you can feel their special emotion (whatever dialogue seems appropriate). Let them know that you appreciate them as unique individuals, and so on. If closeness is what you are after, talk them into it. It sounds hokey, but if it does nothing more than relax your subjects, you have done a good thing.

PERIMETER CHECK

Once your group is composed, and especially when working with larger groups, make a once-around-the-frame visual analysis, making sure poses, lighting, and expressions are good and that nothing needs adjusting. You



Sometimes you will want to pose a family using established hierarchies, in this case by family group. The parents are center-most at the top of the triangle. Their kids plus spouses are arranged beneath the parents, with the childrens' kids scattered throughout. The little ones, by necessity, are pictured in the front. Notice how the photographer coordinated the outfits perfectly—a popular choice, khaki and white. Photograph by Tibor Imely.



This photograph, called *The Proposal*, is an engagement portrait that takes attire coordination to a new level. With costuming, lighting, and propping all consistent, the photographer used a series of amber and red gels to make the image look like it was lit by candlelight. The profile posing is elegant and effective. Note how space is visible on either side of the seated woman to slim her waist. Photograph by Robert Lino.

should not only check each person in the group in the viewfinder, but once that's done, check the negative space around each person. Scan the perimeter of each person, checking for obvious flaws and refinements you could quickly make. *Now* is the time to analyze your image, not after you've made four or five frames. Learn to check the viewfinder quickly. Two quick scans—that's all it takes. You can also make a quick exposure and review the image on the DSLR's LCD screen. This method will freeze the image and let you inspect each quadrant. Do it quickly, however, as you don't want to delay the photo session.

COORDINATING APPAREL

If the group doesn't look unified, the portrait won't look professional. It seems like a simple concept, but that's not

always the case. One noted photographer, who shall remain nameless, says, "They never listen to me no matter how adamant I am about coordinating the clothes. I am constantly amazed at what they show up in."

Some photographers, like Bill McIntosh, are masters of the coordinated environment. Here's what he has to say about planning. "No matter how good your artistic and photographic skills are, there is one more element required to make a great portrait—color harmony." In McIntosh's photographs, the style and color of the clothing all coordinate. He says, "I have ensured these suit both the subjects and the environment chosen." Bill makes sure everything matches. "Time is well spent before the sitting discussing the style of clothing—formal or casual—and then advising clients of particular colors, which

they feel happy with and which will also create a harmonious portrait.”

Some photographers view clothing harmony as the primary element in the fine group portrait. Clothes should be coordinated for color, tone, and style. Take, for example, an uncoordinated group where some are wearing short sleeves, some long; some are wearing light-colored pants and skirts, others dark; some have brown shoes, others white; and each person is wearing a different color and pattern. The result will be a cacophony of clothing styles, and you are going to capture an unattractive portrait, regardless of how good the lighting and composition are.

Photographers’ Favorites. White is a photographer’s favorite clothing color, provided the subjects are of average weight or slender. If your group is on the large side, all that white will make necks and torsos look much larger than they really are. The general rule of thumb is wear

white or pastel, you gain ten pounds; wear dark or medium shades and you lose ten pounds.

Solid-colored clothes, in cool or neutral shades, with long sleeves, always look good. Cool colors, such as blue and green, recede, while warm colors, such as red, orange, and yellow, advance. Cool colors or neutral colors (such as black, white, and gray) will emphasize the faces and make them appear warmer and more pleasing in the photographs.

Your group’s garments should be complementary. For example, all of the family-group members should wear informal or formal outfits. It’s easy when photographing the wedding party when all are dressed identically and formally. Half your battle is won. It is difficult to pose a group when some people are wearing suits and ties and others are wearing jeans and polo shirts. Shoe styles and colors should blend with the rest of a person’s attire: dark outfits call for dark shoes and socks.



What started out as a well-coordinated family portrait with carefully chosen clothing turned into a dramatic, highly colorful graphic image called *Neon Blue Twilight*. Photographer Tibor Imely had the family turn and face the setting sun and then capitalized on the radial spokes of the shadows and those of light rays in the sky to create a mesmerizing image. Tibor later added the violet toning in Photoshop.



This image is called *Punky Luv* and it is by master portrait photographer Giorgio Karayiannis. Giorgio achieved the ultimate in color coordination by first photographing the dynamic duo on color transparency film, then selecting the pink portions of hair in Photoshop so that they would remain in color when he converted the unselected areas of the image to grayscale.

Robert Love boils it down to this: “[Lack of] color coordination is the main reason that people do not like their previous family portraits.” In his pre-session consultation, he talks about color coordination and recommends solid colors, long sleeves, and V-necks for the most flattering portraits.

SEATING

Once you begin adding people to a group, one of your preeminent props will be the stuffed armchair, small sofa,

or love seat. Its wide arms and often attractively upholstered surface is ideal for supporting additional group members.

An armchair is usually positioned at about 30 to 45 degrees to the camera. Regardless of who will occupy the seat, he and/or she should be seated at an angle to the camera. They should be seated on the edge of the chair, so that all of their weight does not rest on the chair back. This promotes good posture and slims the lines of the waist and hips, for both men and women. Note, however,

that you will more than likely have to straighten out seated men's jackets and ask the women to straighten the line of their dresses, as sitting normally causes dresses and coats to ride up and bunch.

Here's how Monte Zucker uses an armchair to build a group of almost any size. A woman sits with the upper part of her legs following in the direction that her body is facing. Her legs are then bent back and her ankles crossed. A man sits similarly, except that his feet aren't crossed. The foot closest to the camera is pointed generally toward the lens, while the other foot is positioned at almost a right angle to the front foot.

For a group of two, you can seat one person and either stand the second person facing the chair (for a full-length picture), or seat the second person on the arm of the chair, facing inward toward the person seated in the chair. The body of the person seated in the chair should be in front of the person seated on the arm.

When adding a third person to the group, you can either seat the person

TOP—The armchair, barely visible, is the basis for this attractive pyramid-shaped portrait. Mom, seated, is moved far forward on the chair for the best posture. The daughters, one on each arm, are facing the opposite direction, helping form the base of the pyramid. The young son is leaning in—not seated or standing, but the overall pose is effective. Notice the diamond-shape to the four central figures, with the fifth member elongating the base of the classic pyramid shape. Photograph by Kenneth Sklute. **BOTTOM**—Here is an extended use of the armchair—two armchairs, with the outermost arm of each being used to create new levels for the group. Notice how bodies overlap to help slim and shape the women in the group. Notice too how hands are either hidden or posed—a good strategy for groups of any size. The bride stands out beautifully because everything about the pose is used to highlight her position in the picture. Photograph by Kenneth Sklute.





This is an intimate, joyous portrait made on the day of the wedding. The photographer, to kick-start the dynamics of the image, tilted the camera to produce a diagonal image, which immediately focuses attention on the slanted faces. This effect would not have been possible without very shallow depth of field, which completely softens the background. One fine point to notice is the delicate line and pose of the woman's hands, which demands your attention. Photograph by Vladimir Bekker.

on the second arm or stand the person. That person should have his/her weight on their back foot, thereby lowering the back shoulder. All three heads should be equidistant.

A group of four has two people seated in chairs, and one person seated on the outermost arm, facing inward

toward the center of the group. The fourth person is standing, facing toward the center of the group. The person seated on the arm of the chair has his arm coming straight down behind the person seated slightly in front of him. In all groups, there should be equal distance between each of the heads. Do not have two heads close

together, while the others are spaced farther apart. It destroys the rhythm of the group.

If there is a heavy person, put that person behind someone, so that you are covering some of his or her body. Make certain that all the people seated on the arms are situated slightly farther from the lens than the people seated in the chairs.

From here on, it's just a question of adding faces where they need to be to continue the flow of the composition. You can fit someone squatted down in the middle of the

group, covering a lot of legs. You can have people kneel down on either side of the group as well as seated on the ground, completing the pyramid composition. This little

RIGHT—This is a wonderful group portrait of two people in love. Perfectly positioned on an intersecting third line, the gaze of the couple forces the direction of the portrait camera left. In order to give the couple a base, the photographer had the man spread his feet outside the form of the woman. Notice the cloud in the upper left that perfectly balances the form of the couple. And notice too the space at the woman's waist created by the posing of her hands—a slimming, form-flattering pose. Monte Zucker photographed this image by direct sunlight, late in the day with no fill. **BELOW**—This is a carefully crafted engagement portrait by Jeff Hawkins Photography. The pose of the couple forms a strong triangle shape by having the woman extend her right leg and the man spread his feet apart. The couple would be unaware that they are creating a dynamic pose, only that it is a comfortable pose. They are positioned looking into the scene from a dynamic spot within the frame. The image was treated with diffusion and Gaussian blur filters in Photoshop.





group can easily become a group of fourteen. Just follow the rhythm throughout the group. Look for the triangles between heads, diagonal lines, and equal spacing between all of the people.

ARRANGING SMALL GROUPS

Start with Two. The simplest of groups is two people. Whether the group is a bride and groom, brother and sister, or grandma and grandpa, the basic building blocks call for one person slightly higher than the other. Generally speaking, the mouth height of the higher subject should be at the forehead height of the lower subject. Many photographers recommend mouth to eyes as the ideal starting point. Also, since this type of image will be fairly close up, you will want to make sure that the frontal planes of their faces are roughly parallel so that you can hold the focus in both faces.

Although they can be posed in a parallel position, each with their shoulders and heads turned the same direction—as one might do with twins, for example—a more interesting dynamic can be achieved by having the two subjects pose at 45-degree angles to each other so their shoulders face in toward one another. With this pose you can create a number of variations by moving them closer or farther apart.

You can also have two profiles facing each other—just be sure that one subject should be still higher than the other, creating an implied diagonal line between their eyes and giving the portrait direction.

FACING PAGE—A wrought-iron gate used as a foreground element in conjunction with a fisheye lens helped create this dynamic bridal portrait. While the gate could easily have distracted from the couple by its size and dominance in the frame, the lighting on the bride and groom and their placement in the composition make this a truly dynamic portrait. Photograph by Vladimir Bekker.

RIGHT—This is a fascinating portrait of three. The intertwined forms of the two women are contrasted and in perfect balance with the young boy with the bow and arrow. The candelabra provides a stopping point for the eye and yet you cannot go back and forth between the subjects without seeing it. The stately elegance and starkness of the room only underscores the sense of mystery in this portrait. Photograph by David Anthony Williams.

Using an armchair allows you to seat one person, usually the woman, and position the other person close and seated on the arm of the chair, leaning on the far armrest. This puts their faces in close proximity but at different heights. (A variation of this is to have the man seated and the woman standing. However, when their heads are so far apart, you should pull back and make the portrait full-length.) When you seat the woman in an armchair, her hands should be in her lap and used to slim the body—waist, thighs, and hips. She should be seated at an angle and the foot of the leg farthest from the camera should be “hooked” behind the front leg—a pose that women seem to fall into naturally.

For as many examples as are given here, there are ten times as many variations. Study groups of two as there are some very dynamic ways to pose two people, only a handful of which are covered here.

Add a Third. A group portrait of three is still small and intimate. It lends itself to a pyramid- or diamond-shaped composition, or an inverted triangle, all of which are pleasing to the eye.

Don't simply adjust the height of the faces so that each is at a different level. Use the turn of the shoulders of



those at either end of the group as a means of linking the group together.

Once you add a third person, you will begin to notice the interplay of lines and shapes inherent in good group design. As an exercise, plot the implied line that goes through the shoulders or faces of the three people in the group. If the line is sharp or jagged, try adjusting the composition so that the line is more flowing, with gentler

angles. Try a simple maneuver like turning the last or lowest person in the group inward toward the group and see what effect it has.

Still as part of the exercise, try a different configuration. For example, create a single diagonal line with the faces at different heights and all people in the group touching. It's a simple yet very pleasing design. The power and serenity of a well-defined diagonal line in a composition can compel

the viewer to keep looking at the portrait. Adjust the group again by having those at the ends of the diagonal tilt their heads slightly in toward the center person. It's a slight adjustment that can make a big difference in the overall design of the image.

How about trying the bird's-eye view? Cluster the group of three together, grab a stepladder or other high vantage point, and you've got a lovely variation on the three-person group.

One of Monte Zucker's favorite strategies for three-person groups at wedding receptions is to have one person seated with two people standing behind, leaning down so that their heads are close to the seated person's head. It's a shot he can make quickly, and all the faces are in the same plane, so sharp focus is easily attained.

When you add a third person to the group, hands and legs start to become a



TOP—A perfect white pyramid is formed with this elegant grouping of three. The pose is formal and yet there is great intimacy and warmth here. Notice how the line of the boy was used to lengthen the shape of the pyramid, and all three faces are in line but at slightly different angles. Note too how the woman has rolled her weight onto the side of her right leg, partially to extend the pose, partially to create a more flattering, slimming look. Photograph by Monte Zucker. **BOTTOM**—This storytelling portrait depends on close cropping and expressions to communicate. This image was part of a series done for Kodak Professional Australia. The young boy is "caught in the act" by the understanding stare-down of the men who bracket him. The cropping of the tops of heads would not ordinarily be done in group portraiture, but here it is an effective means of focusing attention on the boy. Photograph by David Anthony Williams.



Valley Girls was a shot that was literally thrown together on two days' notice for the *Los Angeles Times*. Rather than stick with a "safe" shoot with just one model, the photographer chose to work with four! The shot began by coordinating the outfits. The ladies agreed on black for a tight look that would pull them together as a group. The posing was partially dictated by the lighting and f-stop (f/11) chosen. The camera would need to be fairly close to the subjects to frame the tight portrait. The faces had to be close to the same plane to ensure that each woman's eyes were sharp. The dark backdrop was lit with a red gel to play off the black wardrobe and add some zest to the shot. The main light was a 30x40-inch Photoflex softbox. Various fill-, hair-, and background lights were used as well. Photograph by Stephen Dantzig.

problem. One solution is to show only one arm and leg per person. This is sage advice when, especially when the group is similarly dressed, one is not always sure whose hand belongs to whom. Generally, the outer hand should be visible, the inner hand, compositionally, can be easily hidden.

Groups of three and more allow the photographer to draw on more of the available elements of design, in addition to the design elements of the group itself. The accomplished group photographer will incorporate archi-

tectural components or natural elements, such as hills, trees, shrubs, flowers, gates, archways, furniture, etc.

As you add more people to a group, remember to do everything you can to keep the film plane parallel to the plane of the group to ensure everyone in the photograph is sharply focused.

Adding a Fourth. With four subjects, things get interesting. You will find that as you photograph more group portraits even numbers of people are harder to pose than odd. Three, five, seven, or nine people are much easier to





photograph than the even-numbered group of people. The reason is that the eye and brain tend to accept the disorder of odd-numbered objects more readily than even-numbered objects. According to Norman Phillips, even numbers don't work as well because they make diagonals too long and they leave an extra person to find space for in traditional triangular compositions. As you will see, the fourth member of a group can become an "extra wheel" if not handled properly.

With four people, you can simply add a person to the existing poses of three described above, with the following caveat: be sure to keep the eye height of the fourth person different from any of the others in the group. Also, be aware that you are now forming shapes within your composition. Try to think in terms of pyramids, inverted triangles, diamonds, and curved lines.

The various body parts—for instance, the line up one arm, through the shoulders of several people, and down the arm of the person on the far side of the group—form an implied line that is just as important as the shapes you define with faces. Be aware of both line and shape, and direction, as you build your groups.

An excellent pose for four people is the sweeping curve of three people with the fourth person added below and between the first and second person in the group.

If you find that one of the subjects in your group is not dressed the same as the others (this happens more than you would imagine), he or she can be positioned slightly outside the group for accent, without necessarily disrupting the color harmony of the rest of the group (see page 66).

When Monte Zucker has to pose four people, he sometimes prefers to play off of the symmetry of the even number of people. He'll break the rules and he'll seat two and stand two and, with heads close together, make the line of

When a family is photographed with their prized possession, in this case, the antique Buick, the posing should loosen up so that the group relates visually to the item of value. Here, there is plenty of space between the boys so the car is readily visible between them. Notice that the photographer chose to hide as many hands as possible and position the family in the lower one-third of the image, allowing the Buick to achieve some visual prominence. Even with the beautiful open highlights on the car (by the way, this is done just the way they do it in Detroit) and the golden autumn leaves in the background, the group is still the primary visual center of interest in this carefully crafted portrait. Photograph by Frank Frost.



This is a beautiful family portrait made by Melanie Maganias Nashan in available light. She positioned her group with the sun backlighting them, providing a soft hair- and rim light. The natural foliage and leaves illuminated the frontal sides of the subjects. Melanie biased her exposure toward the shadows so that the highlights are about a half-stop overexposed. Notice the perfect symmetry of the image—the central triangle shape created by the mother and two children is elongated by the two “bookends” on either side of her, dressed identically, but at different head heights. Melanie used a Canon EOS D60 and 35mm lens at ISO 200. Exposure was $\frac{1}{450}$ second at f/4.5.

the eyes of the two people parallel with the eyes of the bottom subjects.

When two of the four are little people, they can be “draped” to either side of the adults to form one of the pleasing traditional shapes.

Five on Up. Remember that the composition will always look better if the base is wider than the top, so the final person should elongate the bottom of the group.

Remember too that each implied line and shape in the photograph should be designed by you and should be intentional. If it isn’t logical—i.e., the line or shape doesn’t make sense visually—then move people around and

start again. The viewer’s eye should not just be meandering through the image but should be guided by the lines and shapes you create within the composition.

Try to coax S shapes and Z shapes out of your compositions. They form the most pleasing shapes and will hold a viewer’s eye within the borders of the print.

Remember that the diagonal line has a great deal of visual power in an image and is one of the most potent design tools at your disposal.

Always remember that the use of different levels creates a sense of visual interest and lets the viewer’s eye bounce from one face to another (as long as there is a logical and

TOP—Rick Ferro created this wonderful “family” portrait and employed a basic triangle shape with a stair-step posing leading from the dogs, to the woman, to the standing man. The lighting is available shade coming in from either side of the group. To fill in the shadows, Rick used reflectors held close to give plenty of light and to create nice catchlights in the eyes. Rick used a Fuji Finepix S2 Pro with an 80–200mm f/2.8 lens at the 90mm setting at ISO 200. The exposure was $\frac{1}{60}$ second at f/8. **BOTTOM**—A fun pose, along with great outfit coordination and great expressions make this a terrific family portrait. Notice how all faces are at different levels and the pose has a strong horizontal base, created by moving the children to the front. This pose was made more effective by loosening it up and creating some space between family members. Photograph by Monte Zucker.

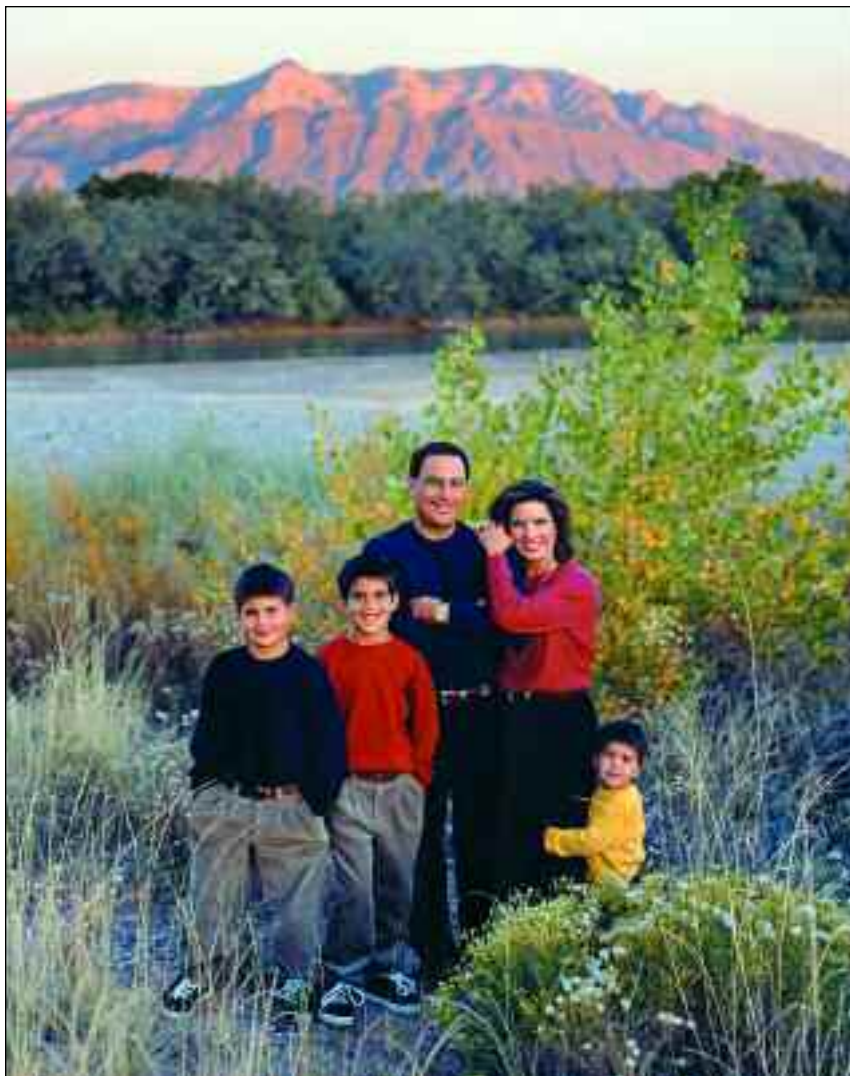
pleasing flow to the arrangement). The placement of faces, not bodies, dictates how pleasing and effective a composition will be.

When adding a sixth or an eighth person to the group, the group still must look asymmetrical for best effect. This is best accomplished by elongating sweeping lines and using the increased space to slot extra people. Keep in mind that while a triangle shape normally calls for three people, you can add a fourth subject and keep the shape intact.

As your groups get bigger, keep your depth of field under control. Use the tricks described earlier (like raising the camera to keep it parallel to the group or leaning the last row in and the front row back slightly to create a shallower subject plane).

As you add people to the group beyond six, you should start to base the shapes within the composition on linked shapes, like linked circles or triangles. What makes the combined shapes work is to turn them toward the center—the diamond shape of four on the left can be turned 20 degrees or less toward center, the diamond shape of four on the right (which may encompass the center person from the other group) can also be turned toward the center.





OBVIOUS THINGS TO AVOID

One of the biggest flaws a portrait photographer can create in an image is a background element that seemingly “sprouts” from one of the subjects. The telephone pole comes to mind as a classic example. While this is an amateur mistake for the most part, the truth is that even award-winning pros make this same mistake when they fail to do a final perimeter check. Be sure to scan the group’s silhouette, making sure there’s nothing in the background that you missed. Pay particular attention to strong verticals, like light-colored posts or columns, and also diagonals. Even though these elements may be out of focus, if they are tonally dominant they will disrupt and often ruin an otherwise beautiful composition.

One way to control your background more effectively is to scout the locations you want to use before you show up to make the portrait. Check the light at the right time of day and be prepared for what the changing light might do to your background an hour or two later.

ABOVE—This is a beautiful environmental portrait. The use of red and black alternating shirts produces a bold ping-pong effect, and the golden shirt on the little guy on the right makes him a “sparkling jewel” in the lower portion of the composition. The boy on the right, because he is dressed in gold (which is much brighter than either red or black) balances the two much larger vertical shapes—the two brothers and their mom and dad. Photograph by Frank Frost. **FACING PAGE, TOP**—The more people you add to a portrait, the greater the difficulty factor. Here Tibor Imely expertly posed and executed this family portrait called *The Whole Family*. The taller men leaning in on the ends unify the group and help create a symmetrical triangle shape. The warm lighting is from the setting sun and comes in from the side, providing excellent modeling light. The clothing is well coordinated, and Tibor managed to animate the three dogs to perfection. **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM**—Ordinarily, attempting to make a portrait in open shade presents a host of problems. Here Janet Baker Richardson observed that there was plenty of fill-in illumination from surrounding sand and stone, voiding the overhead nature of the shade. She photographed these four brothers with unusual expressions on their faces. The group was not exactly overjoyed to be having their portrait made, but the image is charming nonetheless.



[6]

BUILDING BIG GROUPS

Once a group exceeds nine people, it is no longer a small group. The complexities of posing and lighting expand and, if you're not careful to stay in charge, chaos will reign. It is always best to have a game plan in mind with big groups.

Posing bigger groups requires you to use standing poses, often combined with sitting and kneeling poses. Those subjects who are standing should be turned at least 20 degrees off center so that their shoulders are not parallel to the film plane. The exception is with small children, who gain visual prominence when they are square to the camera.

With standing poses, care must be taken to disguise wide hips and torsos, which can sometimes be accomplished simply by using other people in the group. Always create space between the arms and torso simply by placing a hand on a hip or, in the case of men, placing a hand in a pocket (thumb out).

In really large groups, clothing coordination can be a nightmare. It is often best to divide the group into subgroups—family units, for instance—and have them coordinate with each other. For example, a family in khaki pants and yellow sweaters could be positioned next to a family in blue jeans and red sweaters.

NATURALNESS COUNTS

It is important with medium to large-size groups that the poses you put your subjects in appear to be natural and comfortable. Even experienced group photographers working with assistants will take ten minutes or so to set



This elegant bridal group uses four levels: two levels of seated figures, one level of standing-kneel figures, and a level of standing figures. Try and find the shapes and lines at work here. X-shaped patterns of overlapping diagonal lines crisscross the bridal party on both sides of the bride and groom. Both groups are angled in to draw your eye to the bride and groom. The background and foreground are elegant and subdued. Photograph by Kenneth Sklute.

up a group of twenty or more. Therefore, it is imperative that your subjects be posed comfortably. Natural poses,



Big groups mean big problems, not the least of which is uniformity. In this group of nurses made at the Santa Barbara Mission, the dress code was black and, naturally, five showed up in jeans. The photographer did what any portrait artist would do—hide two and form a triangle within the composition with the other three. In order to “spread” the pyramid, the photographer created longer, more sweeping poses to elongate the base of the pyramid shape. The expressions are flawless, as is the lighting. Photograph by Heidi Mauracher.

ones that your subjects might fall into without prompting, are best and can be held indefinitely.

It is important that the group remains alert and in tune with what you are doing. With large groups, it is important to stay in charge of the posing. The loudest voice—the one that people are listening to—should be yours, although by no means should you be yelling at them. Instead, be assertive and positive and act in control.

With natural poses, have your antennae up for errant thumbs and hands that will pop up. Always do a perimeter search around each subject to make sure there is nothing unexpected in the posing.

POSING LEVELS

Two true experts at posing the midsize to large group are Robert and Suzanne Love. I have witnessed them build groups made up of photographers attending one of their workshops and each person, without exception, was amazed when they saw how easy the Loves’ technique is and how attractive the arrangement turned out. The basic principle in the Loves’ technique is the use of different posing levels and the combinations of those levels used adjacent to one another. Here’s a brief look at the system.

Level 1, Standing. Each standing subject has his or her weight on their back foot and is posed at a 45-degree



LEFT—Multiple levels and overlapping shapes define this fine family portrait. The group to the left seems disconnected from the seated group to the right until you realize there is a subtle diagonal connecting the two groups. Also, you can follow the line of black sweaters from left to right. Note the creative use of levels in the group on the right and the all-standing pose on the left—contrast and balance. Photograph by Norman Phillips. **BELOW**—This is a truly wonderful environmental group portrait. First note the lead-in line of the foreground log that draws your eye to the group. There is a subgroup of three figures on the left that form a gentle C shape, and a subgroup on the right, which forms a pleasing diagonal. In the center is the inverted triangle shape. All three groups are connected, and the face heights are staggered beautifully. Posing is completely natural; expressions are real and pleasing. Photograph by Frank Frost.





ABOVE—This group is as carefully controlled as if it were posed with all participants completely still. Kevin Kubota had the group charge up the hill as he fired away with his D1X and 17mm lens at $\frac{1}{640}$ second at f/3.8 to freeze the action. Using backlighting, Kevin biased the exposures toward the shadow side of the group so the hair would be overexposed but there would be full detail in the faces and clothing. He also burned-in the shadows to amplify their graphic effect. The long shadows are as much a part of the image as the group itself. **RIGHT**—This image breaks all the rules, but it is still effective. While it seems casual and spontaneous, the design of the image is wonderful. The arches seem to mirror each individual group and there is a dynamic within each of the three groups. Even though the portrait is a long horizontal line, there are plenty of diagonals and angled lines to offer visual interest. Photograph by Kenneth Sklute.



angle to the camera, lowering the rear shoulder to diminish overall body size.

Level 2, Tall Kneel. Generally a masculine pose, not unlike a football players' team pose, this pose calls for the man to get down on one knee with his other leg bent at 90 degrees. The elbow of the arm on the same side as the knee that is up should rest on the knee.

Level 3, Short Kneel. This is the same pose as above but both knees are on the ground and the person's weight

is back on their calves. This pose is good for either men or women, but with women in dresses, they are usually turned at a 45-degree angle.

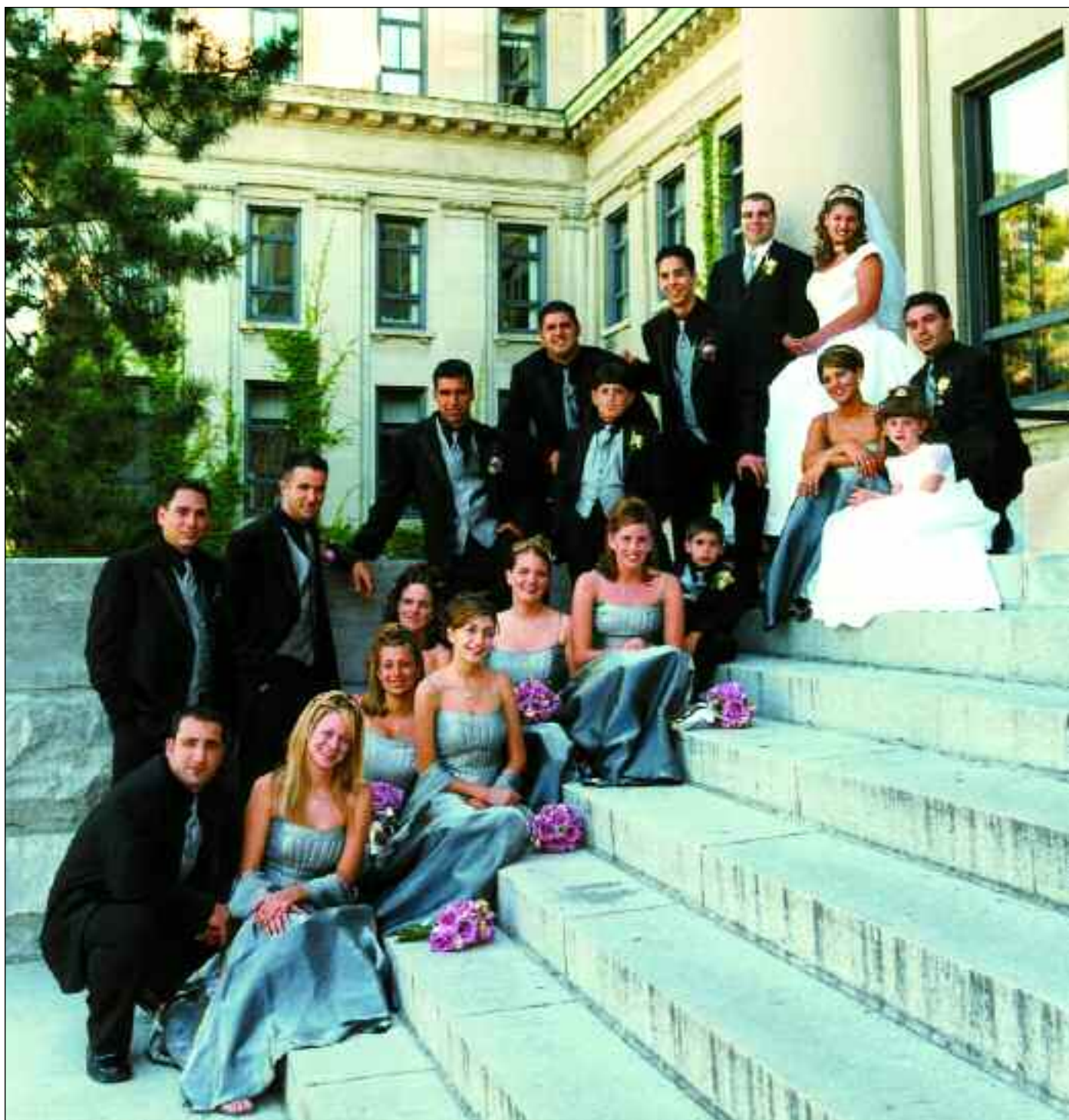
Level 4, Sitting. The man sits on his buttocks with the leg that is toward the camera curled under the leg that's away from the camera. The elbow rests across his raised knee. For a woman wearing slacks, this is appropriate. However, a more graceful seated pose is achieved when she lays on her hip and rolls slightly toward the camera.

Her legs then flow out to the side with the ankles crossed. Her top hand can rest on her lower thigh or in front of her. If she can bring her top knee over to touch the ground, her body produces a beautiful curved line.

Level 5, Lying Down. The subjects can lay on their sides with their hands resting on the sides of their faces,

or can lay on their stomachs with their arms folded in front of them. This really works better for an individual pose, rather than a group, but it offers another level if needed.

By intermixing the levels without defining rows, you can pose ten to twenty people quite easily and informal-



If the photographer had tried to find a blue stone that matched the dresses and vests, he undoubtedly would have been looking for a long time. Here, however, serendipity came into play—and the color coordination with the steps and buildings is nearly perfect. Although this group has great structure—two sweeping diagonals intersecting the square format, there is great casualness and joy in the poses. The bride and groom certainly stand out, being the tallest figures in the frame. Photograph by Anthony Cava.

The very formal wedding portrait is a difficult image to make. Notice the symmetry to the left and right and the uniformity of the poses of the eight bridesmaids. Each elbow is bent at the same place, and the bouquets are front and center. The symmetry is contrasted with the curving shapes of the foliage in the background and the flowing lines of the Spanish architecture. Photograph by Kenneth Sklute.

ly. Each face is at a different level and no face is directly below or above another, providing good visual interest. And while the group is really quite highly structured, it doesn't appear that way.

STEPLADDERS

A stepladder is a must for large groups and, in fact, should be a permanent tool in your wedding and portrait arsenal. Stepladders give you the high angle that lets you fit lots of people together in a tight group, like a bouquet of flowers. Ladders also give you a means to correct low shooting angles, which distort perspective. The tendency is to overuse them, so use a stepladder when you need to or when you want to offer variety in your groups.

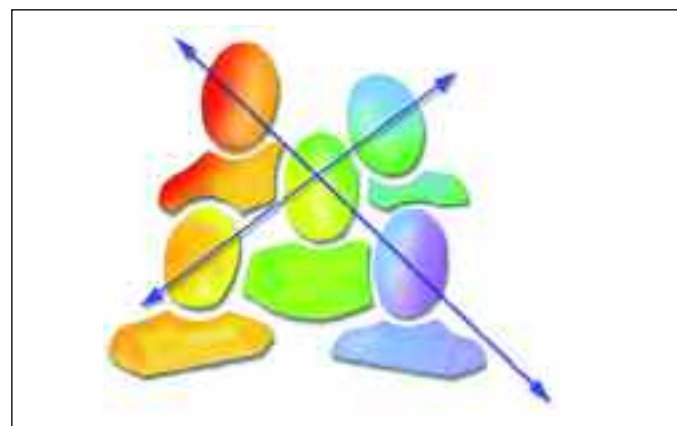
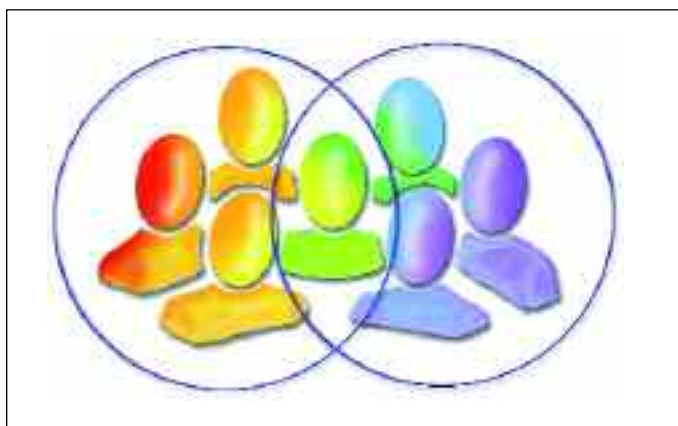
A stepladder is the answer to the refrain, "Boy, I sure wish I could get up on that balcony for this shot." But a few words of caution: have your assistant or someone strong hold on to the ladder in case the ground gives or you lean the wrong way. Safety first.



In less dramatic ways, a stepladder lets you raise the camera height just slightly so that you can keep the group plane parallel to the film plane for better depth-of-field control.

LINKING SHAPES

The bigger the group, the more you must depend on your basic elements of group portrait design—circles, triangles, inverted triangles, diagonals, and diamond shapes. You



LEFT—The overlapping circles around these shapes define each pattern as unique, even though both shapes use the same person centrally. In a portrait like this, each subset should be turned in toward the center to unify the composition, or turned away from center to create a bookend effect.

RIGHT—Be aware of intersecting lines that flow through the design. As mentioned earlier, the diagonal is by far the most compelling visual line in compositions and can be used repeatedly without fear of overuse. Diagram concepts courtesy of Norman Phillips.



Here's a very unusual group shot. Everyone's attention is riveted on the bride and groom and, for whatever reason, everyone in the group is extremely delighted by the moment. Australian Marcus Bell anticipated the moment, found a high vantagepoint where he could concentrate on the reaction of the group, and fired away.

must also really work to highlight and accentuate lines, real and implied, throughout the group. If you lined people up in a row, you would have a very uninteresting "team photo," a concept that is the antithesis of fine group portraiture.

The best way to previsualize this effect is to form subgroups as you start grouping people. For example, how about three bridesmaids here (perhaps forming an inverted triangle), three sisters over on the right (perhaps forming a flowing diagonal line), a brother, a sister and their two kids (perhaps in a diamond shape with the littlest one standing between her mom and dad). Then combine the subsets, linking the line of an arm with the line of a dress. Leave a little space between these subgroups, so that the design shapes you've formed don't become too compressed. Let the subgroups flow from one to the next and then analyze the group as a whole to see what you've created.

Remember that arms and hands help complete the composition by creating motion and dynamic lines that

can and should lead up into the subjects' faces. Hands and arms can "finish" lines started by the basic shape of the group.

Just because you might form a triangle or a diamond shape with one subset in a group does not mean that one of the people in that group cannot be used as an integral part of another group. You might find, for example, that the person in the middle of a group of seven unites two diamond shapes. The overlapping circles around these shapes (see diagram on page 87) define each pattern as unique, even though both shapes use the same person. In a portrait like this, each subset could be turned slightly toward the center to unify the composition or turned away from the center to give a bookend effect.

Be aware of intersecting lines that flow through the design. As mentioned earlier, the diagonal is by far the most compelling visual line and can be used repeatedly without fear of overuse. The curving diagonal is even more pleasing and can be mixed with sharper diagonals within the composition.

THE REALLY BIG GROUP

For really big groups it is a good idea to have the subjects stand close together, touching. This minimizes the space between people, allowing you to get a larger head size for each person. One directive you must give to the group is that they must be able to see the camera with both eyes. This will ensure that you see all of their faces and that none will be hiding behind the person in front of them.

With big groups, fight the tendency to “line ‘em up and shoot ‘em.” This is, after all, a portrait and not a team photo. You can incorporate all types of design elements into even the largest groups.



Caresse Muir got on top of a fire truck to photograph this recruit class of the Los Angeles Fire Department using a Mamiya 645 with a 55mm lens. The scene was lit with ambient light as the sun was setting, and the lights on the trucks that are typically used to illuminate the area when fighting night fires was used to further illuminate the scene. A spotlight was on the tower in the background. The firefighters washed down the cement to enhance the reflection. All of the fire department's equipment, it seems, is included in the shot, and the firemen are actually only a small part of the group shot. Yet everyone is sharp, the image is well composed, and there is detail throughout—even in the cockpit of the helicopter and the cab of the big hook-and-ladder truck in the foreground.

[7]

OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Groups may be photographed in open sunlight or open shade. They may be back lit, side lit, or front lit. What is more important than the direction of the light is the evenness of the light. As Robert Love says, the secret to a great group portrait is to “light them evenly from left to right and from front to back.” Good outdoor lighting is

primarily what separates the good group photographers from the truly great ones. Learning to control, predict, and alter daylight to suit the needs of the group to be photographed is the ultimate objective of the group portrait photographer.

ROUNDNESS

The human face consists of a series of planes, very few of which are completely flat. The human face is sculpted and round, and it is the job of a portrait photographer to show the contours of the human face. This is done primarily with highlights and shadows. Highlights are areas that are illuminated by the main light source; shadows are areas that are not. The interplay of highlight and shadow creates roundness and shows form. Just as a sculptor



This is an ingenious way to handle a large bridal party. Photographer Cal Landau had the group walk toward him on a deserted airstrip. Direct sunlight late in the day was coming through the trees intermittently. Cal waited until the bride and groom emerged into the sun and made the exposure, based on a sunlight reading. Because the camera was at ground level and tilted up, the group has a dynamic character. The image was made with an EOS 10D, 80–200mm zoom lens at the 117mm setting, and an ISO of 400. The exposure setting was $\frac{1}{1000}$ second at f/8.

models clay to create the illusion of form, so light models the shape of the face to give it depth and roundness.

LIGHTING RATIOS

The term “lighting ratio” is used to describe the difference in intensity between the shadow and highlight side of the face. It is expressed numerically. A 3:1 ratio, for example, means that the highlight side of the face has three units of light falling on it, while the shadow side has only one unit of light falling on it. That’s all the lighting ratio means.

Ratios are useful because they determine how much local contrast there will be in the portrait. They do not determine the overall contrast of the scene; rather, lighting ratios determine how much contrast you will give to the lighting of the subject(s). (Note: In the descriptions that follow, the key light refers to the main light source(s). The fill light refers to the source(s) of illumination that fills in the shadows created by the main or key light. In outdoor lighting situations, the key light can either be daylight or artificial light, such as that from an electronic flash or reflector. The fill light outdoors can also be either daylight or flash.)

Since lighting ratios reflect the difference in intensity between the key light and the fill light, the ratio is an indication of how much

shadow detail you will have in the final portrait. Since the fill light controls the degree to which the shadows are illuminated, it is important to keep the lighting ratio fairly



TOP—One might take a look at this location and think it is absolutely perfect. It provides soft late-afternoon side light that models and shapes faces, it has a nearly perfect background of multicolored flowers and architecture that has its own light, and it has beautiful California mission architecture. It only took the photographer a half a dozen times shooting there to figure it all out, but she finally mastered it. Photograph by Heidi Mauracher. **BOTTOM**—You think this might be open shade with no fill? Guess again. The photo was taken in early evening as the sun disappeared behind several trees. The sky over and in front of the ballerinas was open, which created a very soft, beautiful lighting. The photographer used a small amount of on-camera fill flash to soften the shadows. The image was made with a Hasselblad with a 180mm lens, Kodak PPF 400 film exposed for $\frac{1}{250}$ second at f/5.6, and flash set at f/5.6. The lighting ratio is a gorgeous 3:1. Photograph by Dale Hansen.





FACING PAGE—Beautiful natural daylight with no fill-in source. The backlight gives dimension to the background and also with the faces in true profile, there is just enough of a highlight on the girl's face to define a lighting pattern. The photographer wanted to isolate the moment of a tender kiss and a touch. A Mamiya RB 67 camera and 250mm lens were used to make the shot. Kodak PPF 400 film was exposed for $\frac{1}{60}$ second at f/8. The ratio is a hard 3:1 or 3.5:1. Photograph by Bill Duncan. **ABOVE**—Al Gordon is a virtuoso of flash fill. Here he waited until the perfect moment at sunset to create this fun wedding-party photo. Note that both the flash and ambient exposures are perfect, and as if to increase the difficulty factor, he had the group splash with their feet so he could freeze the water with his flash. Also note his higher-than-head-height vantage point and perfect arrangement of the group. Yet for all of this control, there is spontaneity and joy in the image.

constant. A desirable ratio for outdoor group portraits in color is 3:1 because it is ideal for average shaped faces.

Ratios are determined by measuring the intensity of the fill light on both sides of the face with a light meter, then measuring the intensity of the key-light side of the face only. If the fill light is next to the camera, it will cast one unit of light on each side (shadow and highlight sides) of the face. The key light, however, only illuminates the highlight side.

Determining Lighting Ratios. There is considerable debate and confusion over the calculation of lighting ratios. This is principally because you have two systems at work, one arithmetical and one logarithmic. F-stops are in themselves a ratio between the size of the lens aperture and the focal length of the lens, which is why they are expressed as f/2.8, for example. The difference between one f-stop and the next full f-stop is either half the light

or double the light. F/8 lets in twice as much light through a lens as f/11 and half as much light as f/5.6.

However, when we talk about light ratios, each full stop is equal to two units of light. Therefore, each half stop is equal to one unit of light, and each quarter stop is equivalent to half a unit of light. This is, by necessity, arbitrary, but it makes the light ratio system explainable and repeatable. In other words, it is a practical system for determining the difference between the highlight and shadow sides of the face.

Further, most seasoned photographers have come to recognize the subtle differences between lighting ratios and will strive to reproduce such subtleties in their exposures. For instance, a photographer might recognize that with a given width of face, a 2:1 ratio does not provide enough dimension and a 4:1 ratio is too dramatic, thus he or she would strive for a 3:1 ratio. The differences

between ratios are easy to observe with practice, as are the differences between fractional ratios like 3.5:1 or 4.5:1, which are reproduced by reducing or increasing the fill light amount in quarter-stop increments.

In lighting of all types, from portraits made in the sunlight to portraits made in the studio, the fill light is always calculated as one unit of light because it strikes both the

highlight and shadow sides of the face. The amount of light from the key light, which strikes only the highlight side of the face, is added to that number. For example, imagine you are photographing a small group of three and the main light is one stop greater than the fill light. These two lights are metered independently and separately. The one unit of the fill (because it illuminates both the

shadow and highlight sides of the faces) is added to the two units of the key light, thus producing a 3:1 ratio.

Lighting Ratios and Their Unique Personalities. A 2:1 ratio is the lowest lighting ratio you should employ. It shows only minimal roundness in the face and is most desirable for high key-effects. High-key portraits are those with low lighting ratios, light tones, and usually a light background. In a 2:1 lighting ratio, the key and fill light sources are the same intensity. One unit of light falls on the shadow and highlight sides of the face from the fill light, while an additional unit of light falls on the highlight side of the face from the key light— $1+1=2:1$. A 2:1 ratio



TOP—The photographer found this wonderful skimming light late in the afternoon, just before sunset. At such a low angle, the sun is side lighting every strand of the prairie grass, almost illuminating it from within. The sun is blocked from the foliage and grasses beyond the subjects, making the area subdued so that the subjects stand out. There is no source of fill-in used, only the minimal wraparound light of the sun on the subjects, which makes the black and blue tones of the subjects' clothing even more prominent in the sunlit scene. Photograph by Frank Frost. **BOTTOM**—This is an image made at twilight. You can see the last rays of the sun on the mountaintops in the background. Since the sun is behind and to the left, gentle backlight rims the hair of the group. The open sky is now the key light and the quality is soft and nondirectional. This photographer very rarely uses any source of fill-in light for his outdoor group portraits, preferring instead the natural softbox that is the sky at twilight. Photograph by Frank Frost.

Open shade in an open courtyard can be completely overhead in nature, but in this case it is totally diffuse. There is only slight frontal direction to the light and almost no shadows. The black foreground arch and the darkened and diffused stonework focus your eye on the couple. Photograph by Vladimir Bekker.

will widen a narrow face and provide a flat rendering that lacks dimension.

A 3:1 lighting ratio is produced when the key light is one stop greater in intensity than the fill light. One unit of light falls on both sides of the face from the fill light, and two additional units of light fall on the high-light side of the face from the key light— $2+1=3:1$. This ratio is the most preferred for color and black & white because it will yield an exposure with excellent shadow and highlight detail. It shows good roundness in the face and is ideal for rendering average-shaped faces.

A 4:1 ratio (the key light is $1\frac{1}{2}$ stops greater in intensity than the fill light— $3+1=4:1$) is used when a slimming or dramatic effect is desired. In this ratio, the shadow side of the face loses its slight glow and the accent of the portrait becomes the highlights. Ratios of 4:1 and higher are appropriate for low-key portraits, which are characterized by dark tones and, usually, a dark background.

A 5:1 ratio (the key light is two stops greater than the fill light— $4+1=5:1$) and higher is considered almost a high-contrast rendition. It is ideal for creating a dramatic effect and is often used in character studies. Shadow detail is minimal at the higher ratios and as a result, they are not recommended unless your only concern is highlight detail. This holds true for film and digital.

FINDING GOOD LIGHT

Unlike the studio, where you can set the lights to obtain any effect you want, in nature you must use the light that you find. By far the best place to make outdoor group portraits is in the shade, away from direct sunlight.

Shade is nothing more than diffused sunlight. Contrary to popular belief, shade is not directionless. It has a



definite direction. The best shade for groups is found in or near a clearing in the woods. Where trees provide an overhang above the subjects, the light is blocked. In a clearing, diffused light filters in from the sides, producing better modeling on the face than in open shade.

Open shade is overhead in nature and most unflattering. Like noontime sun, it leaves deep shadows in the eye sockets and under the nose and chin of the subjects. The best kind of shade comes from an angle. If forced to shoot your group in open shade, you must fill in the daylight with a frontal flash or reflector.

Another popular misconception about shade is that it is always a soft light. Particularly on overcast days, shade can be harsh, producing bright highlights and deep shadows, especially around midday. Move under an overhang, such as a tree with low-hanging branches or a covered porch, and you will immediately notice that the light is less harsh and has good direction. The quality of light will also be less overhead in nature, coming from the side, not obscured by the overhang.



THE BEST LIGHT

As many of the great photographs in this book illustrate, the best time of day for making great group pictures is just after the sun has set. The sky becomes a huge softbox and the effect of the lighting on your subjects is soft and even, with no harsh shadows.

There are two problems with working with this great light. One, it's dim. You will need to use medium to fast film or an equivalent digital ISO setting combined with slow shutter speeds, which can be problematic if there are children involved. Working in subdued light also restricts your depth of field by virtue of having to choose wide apertures. The second problem in working with this light is that twilight does not produce catchlights, the white specular highlights in the eyes of the subjects. For this reason, most photographers augment the twilight with some type of flash, either barebulb flash or softbox-mounted flash that provides a twinkle in the eye.

TOP—This family bought a new Prowler automobile and the photographer suggested they use it in a retro-style portrait with clothes that were reminiscent of the 1930s. The portrait was made on a hill, and the Prowler was angled on a slant toward the photographer, who was on a six-foot stepladder looking down on them to get this beautiful angle. The scene was backlit and the daylight exposure was $\frac{1}{125}$ second at f/11. The exposure for the barebulb flash was set at an output of f/11. The Mamiya RZ 67 camera had a 37mm fisheye lens attached. Photograph by Bill McIntosh. **BOTTOM**—This gorgeous composition, called *Harp to Harp*, is a series of overlapping triangles. Every prominent detail is visible in the photograph, thanks to the careful lighting. The women and the harps are softly backlit, as is the foliage. A diffused Metz flash at the camera position produced $1\frac{1}{2}$ stops less output than the ambient light—just enough to fill in the faces and give a little sparkle to the harps, but not enough to bring out any detail in the black clothing. Photograph by Patrick Rice.





When the sun has just gone down, the sky on the oceanfront is more dramatic. The light, however, is frequently flat and lacks contrast. The photographer used a Lumedyne barebulb strobe to make the people stand out. The exposure for the sky was $\frac{1}{30}$ second at f/8. For more saturation in the sky, he set the strobe output for f/8 and the shutter for $\frac{1}{60}$ second, underexposing the sky by one f-stop. By underexposing the ambient light, the flash becomes the key light and while it makes the sky much deeper, it also creates a set of shadows from the flash. In this case, the shadows are not objectionable. A Mamiya RZ 67 with a 90mm lens and Fuji NHG II 800 film were used to create the image. Photograph by Bill McIntosh.

ONE MAIN LIGHT

Just as in the studio, it is important to have only one key light in your group portraits. This is a fundamental in all portraiture. Other lights can modify the key light, but, just as in nature, there should be a single main light source. Most photographers who shoot a lot of group portraits subscribe to the use of a single key light for groups, indoors or out, and filling the shadows of the key light with one or more flash units.

REFLECTORS

You are at the mercy of nature when you are looking for a lighting location. Sometimes it is difficult to find the right

type of light for your needs. It is a good idea to carry along a portable light reflector. The size of the reflector should be fairly large—the larger it is, the more effective it will be. Portable light discs, which are reflectors made of fabric mounted on a flexible and collapsible circular or rectangular frame, come in a variety of diameters and are a very effective means of fill-in illumination. They are available from a number of manufacturers and come in silver (for maximum fill output), white, gold foil (for a warming fill light), and black (for subtractive effects).

When the shadows produced by diffused light are harsh and deep, or even when you just want to add a little sparkle to the eyes of your subjects, use a large reflec-

tor or even several reflectors. It helps to have an assistant or several light stands with clamps so that you can precisely set the reflectors. Be sure to position them outside the frame. With foil-type reflectors used close to the subject, you can even sometimes overpower the ambient light, creating a pleasing and flattering lighting pattern.

Reflectors should be used close to the subject, just out of view of the camera lens. You will have to adjust the

reflector(s) several times to create the right amount of fill-in. Always observe lighting effects from the camera position. Be careful about bouncing light in from beneath your subjects. Lighting coming from under the eye/nose axis is generally unflattering. Try to “focus” your reflectors (this really requires an assistant), so that you are only filling the shadows that need filling in.

FILL-IN FLASH

A more predictable form of fill-in is electronic flash. As mentioned, many photographers shooting group portraits use barebulb flash, a portable flash unit with a vertical flash tube, like a beacon, that fires the flash a full 360 degrees with the reflector removed. You can use as wide a lens as you own and you won't get flash falloff with barebulb flash. Barebulb flash produces a sharp, sparkly light, which is too harsh for almost every type of photography except outdoor groups. The trick is not to overpower the daylight. This is the best source of even fill-in illumination. Look at the environmental portraits by Bill McIntosh that are sprinkled throughout this book. In each of his outdoor portraits he uses a 50 watt-second barebulb flash to either fill in backlit subjects or to add a little punch to sunlit subjects when the sun is very low, as it is early in the morning or at sunset.

Some photographers like to soften their fill flash. Robert Love, for example, uses a Lumedyne strobe inside of a 24-inch softbox. He triggers the strobe cordlessly with a radio remote control. Instead of using the fill-in flash head on a slight angle, which is customary, he often uses his flash at a 45-degree angle to his subjects (for small groups) for a modeled fill-in. For larger groups, he uses the softbox next to the camera for more even coverage.



Al Gordon created a studio lighting setup at sunset by using a studio flash and softbox on a light stand for flash key. In this image the flash became the key light, overpowering the daylight, as the photographer underexposed the background by about $1\frac{1}{2}$ stops in order to saturate the brilliant colors of sunset. Getting the light up and to the side gives modeling and dimension to the couple's form.

TOP—This elegant portrait is a study in triangles—the group itself, the incoming surf, and the silhouetted, jutting coastline. The lighting was direct diffused skylight. The sun was setting, but the light from the sky is frontal in nature. All the photographer had to do was turn the group toward the light and she got perfect modeling. The sky portion of the image was given a dark-orange color and the water itself was brightened in Photoshop. Photograph by Heidi Mauracher. **BOTTOM**—This elegant shot of a mother and daughter was given an ethereal feeling by the addition of atmospheric fog in Photoshop. The original image was made at twilight with no fill-in light, so the posing had to be perfect, since the forms rather than the surface texture and details were what was important. Perfect placement in the frame and the diffusion and fog effects make the picture look like a fond memory. Photograph by Gary Fagan.

Other photographers, especially those shooting 35mm systems, prefer on-camera TTL (through-the-lens) flash. Many on-camera TTL flash systems use a mode for TTL fill-in flash that will balance the flash output to the ambient-light exposure for balanced fill flash. Many such systems are also controllable by virtue of flash-output compensation that allows you to dial in full- or fractional-stop output changes for the desired ratio of ambient-to-fill illumination. They are marvelous systems and, of more importance, they are reliable and predictable. Some of these systems also allow you to remove the flash from the camera with a TTL remote cord.

USING FLASH FILL, METERING, AND EXPOSURE

Here is the scenario for measuring and setting the light output for a fill-in flash situation. This will produce a true fill light with the ambient light stronger than the fill-in light.

First meter the scene. It is best to use a handheld incident flashmeter, with the hemisphere pointed at the camera from the group position. In this hypothetical



example, the metered exposure is $\frac{1}{15}$ second at $f/8$. Now, with a flashmeter, meter the flash only. Your goal is for the flash output to be one stop less than the ambient exposure. Adjust flash output or flash-to-subject distance until your flash reading is $f/5.6$. Set the camera to $\frac{1}{15}$ second at $f/8$. If shooting digitally, fire off a frame and check that you like the flash-to-ambient light ratio and that the exposure is good.

If the light is dropping or the sky is brilliant in the scene and you want to shoot for optimal color saturation in the background, overpower the daylight with flash. Returning to the hypothetical situation where the daylight exposure was $\frac{1}{15}$ second at $f/8$, now adjust your flash output so your flash reading is $f/11$, a stop more powerful than the daylight. Set your camera to $\frac{1}{15}$ second at $f/11$. The flash is now the key light and the soft twilight is the fill light. The problem with this is that you will get a separate set of shadows from the flash. This can be okay, however, since there aren't really any shadows from the twilight. Keep in mind that it is one of the side effects.

Remember that electronic flash falls off in intensity rather quickly, so be sure to take your meter readings from the center of your group and even from either end to be on the safe side. With a small group of three or four, you can get away with moving the strobe away from the camera to get better modeling, but not with larger groups, as the falloff is too great. You can, however, add a second flash of equal intensity and distance on the opposite side of the camera to help widen the light.

Remember that you are balancing two light sources in one scene. The ambient light exposure will dictate the exposure on the background and the subjects. The flash exposure only affects the subjects. When you hear of photographers "dragging the shutter," it refers to using a shutter speed slower than X-sync speed in order to expose the background properly. Understanding this concept is a prerequisite for effectively using flash fill.

BACKGROUND CONTROL

The best type of background for a portrait made in the shade is monochromatic. If the background is all the same color, the subjects will stand out from it. Problems arise when there are patches of sunlight in the background. These light patches can be minimized by shooting at wide lens apertures. The shallow depth of field



blurs the background so that light and dark tones merge. You can also use a diffuser over the camera lens to give your portrait an overall misty feeling. You will also be minimizing a distracting background.

Another way to minimize a distracting background is in printing. By burning-in or diffusing the background you make it darker, softer, or otherwise less noticeable. This technique is really simple in Photoshop, since it's



Jeffrey and Julia Woods really like their groups to have fun. Here, they posed the wedding party with some silly props and drinks in their hands outside the reception. What was supposed to be a formal group portrait turned into a fun-filled adventure. Photographed from above with a Canon EOS 1D Mark II, and 15mm lens at ISO 320. Notice how the principals are kept away from the frame edges where they would distort. Everybody in the image looks great, but it's particularly important that the bride and groom look great—and they do.

fairly easy to select the subjects, invert the selection so that the background is selected, and perform all sorts of maneuvers on it, from diffusion to color correction, and density correction.

When working outdoors, some photographers prefer to place more space between group members to allow the background to become more integrated into the overall design of the image.



TOP—This type of wedding group portrait is popular in England. There is no telling how many “takes” this took, but the jumping action of the group is perfect. The countryside is an elegant background that contrasts the “playground” pose. The photographer needed enough light and fast enough film to create a very short shutter speed to completely stop the action. He then darkened the frame edges and cropped the image to highlight the joy of this wonderful family. Photograph by Stephen Pugh. **ABOVE**—Late-afternoon sun can be very soft and muted, as is seen here. The light provides direction and, unlike a cloudy day, the light has a warm tone. Ron Capobianco had his wedding party jump from a stationary position and, as a result, each person is at a different height. Ron used a Nikon D100 and 21mm lens. An exposure of $\frac{1}{400}$ second at $f/5.6$ was used to freeze the action.

DIRECT SUNLIGHT

Sometimes you are forced to photograph your groups in bright sunlight. While not the best scenario, a good image is still possible. Turn your group so the direct sunlight is backlighting or rim lighting the subjects. Backlighting voids the harshness of the light and prevents your subjects from squinting. Of course, you need to add fill to the front of the subjects with strobe (reflectors would cause

your subjects to squint) and you must also be careful not to underexpose the image, which is a common problem in backlit scenes. Also, in backlit portraits, it is best to increase the exposure by a third to a half stop to open up the skin tones.

Don’t trust your in-camera meter in backlit situations. It will read the bright background and highlights on the hair instead of the exposure on the faces. If you expose for

the background light, you will silhouette the subjects. If you have no other meter than the in-camera one, move in close and take a close-up reading on your subjects. It is really best to use a handheld incident meter in backlit situations. Be sure, however, to shield the hemisphere from direct backlight when taking a reading for the faces.

If the sun is low in the sky, you can use cross lighting (split lighting) to get good modeling on your group. Almost half of the face will be in shadow while the other half is highlighted. You must be careful to position subjects so that the sun's side lighting does not hollow out the eye sockets on the highlight side of the face. You must also position your subjects so that one person's head doesn't block the light striking the person next to him or her. There must be adequate fill-in so that the shadows don't go dead. Try to keep your fill-in flash output equal to or about a stop less than your daylight exposure.

It is important to check the background while composing a portrait in direct sunlight. Since there is considerably more light than in a portrait made in the shade, the

tendency is to use an average shutter speed like $\frac{1}{250}$ second with a smaller-than-usual aperture like f/11. Smaller apertures will sharpen up the background and distract from your subject. Preview the depth of field to analyze the background. Use a faster shutter speed and wider aperture to minimize background effects in these situations.

PROBLEMS OUTDOORS

One thing you must watch for outdoors is subject separation from the background. A dark-haired group against a dark-green forest background will not separate tonally, creating a tonal merger. Controlling the amount of flash fill or increasing the background exposure would be logical solutions to the problem.

Natural subject positioning is sometimes a problem when you are working outdoors. If one is available, a fence makes a good subject support. If you have to pose the group on the ground, be sure it is not wet or muddy. Bring along a small blanket, which, when folded, can be hidden beneath the subjects. It will ease the discomfort



Working in direct sunlight is sometimes impossible, yet other times it is the only choice available. Here the late-afternoon sun was very low in the sky and produced bright, warm-tone lighting. Photographer Becker had the groom pick up his bride. With the lighting so perfect, Becker naturally left the color balance golden colored.



Whether you shoot events, weddings, or parties, a group of three people talking is one you'll photograph frequently. Here photographer Marcus Bell encountered good diffused daylight coming in from the side of the group, illuminating all three subjects. The group was standing beneath a white tent, which transmits some light but blocks the overhead light—ideal for producing great lighting. Functioning as if he were invisible, Marcus waited for the right moment and fired a few frames.

of a posing for a long session and also keep the subjects clean and dry.

If possible, always shoot with a tripod. Shutter speeds will generally be on the slow side, especially when shooting in shade. Also, a tripod helps you compose more carefully and gives you the freedom to walk around the scene and adjust things as well as to converse freely with your subjects.

Sometimes you may choose a beautiful location for a portrait, but the background is totally unworkable. It may be a bald sky or have too much clutter. If shooting film, the best way to handle such backgrounds is with a soft-

focus filter or vignette. The soft-focus filter lowers the overall contrast of the scene and background, and fill flash can then be used to raise the light level on the subjects. The vignette masks out unwanted areas of the background or foreground. Vignettes are black or white opaque or transparent cards held in an adjustable lens stage that can be racked in and out for the desired effect. Since the vignette is so close to the lens, it is automatically out of focus unless you are stopped down to an intermediate or small f-stop. If shooting digitally, problem backgrounds are easily handled in Photoshop by either diffusion, burning and/or dodging problem areas, or by

vignetting. These effects are achieved after carefully selecting the foreground and the subjects, and then inverting the selection so that only the background is selected.

Another problem you may encounter is excess cool coloration in portraits taken in shade. If your subject is standing in a grove of trees surrounded by green foliage, there is a good chance green will be reflected into the group. If the subject is exposed to clear, blue, open sky, there may be an excess of cyan in the skin tones. This won't affect your black & white shots, but when working in color, you should beware.

To correct green or cyan coloration, you must first observe it. While you are setting up, your eyes will become accustomed to seeing the off-color rendering. Color film is not as forgiving. Study the faces carefully and especially note the coloration of the shadow areas of the face. If

the color of the light is neutral, you will see gray in the shadows. If not, you will see either green or cyan.

One way to correct this coloration is to use color-compensating (CC) filters over the lens. These are usually gelatin filters that fit in a gel filter holder. To correct for excess green coloration, use a CC 10M (magenta) or CC 15M filter. To correct for a cyan coloration, use a CC 10R (red) or CC 15R filter. This should neutralize the color shift in your scene. Alternately, you can use warming filters, of which there are quite a few. These will generally correct the coolness of shade scenes. Perhaps the easiest way to deal with off color skin tones is to use fill flash at the same aperture as the existing light. This will neutralize the color shift in the shadows.

If shooting digitally, a custom white balance reading in such conditions is recommended. Often you will still



Dennis Orchard captured this wonderful portrait of bride and groom strolling through a field of yellow tulips. The light, basically open shade, is blocked from one side by the stand of trees visible in the background. The trees give the overhead light more of a frontal direction.



have to make subtle adjustments in Photoshop. One technique that is quite easy is to use Selective Color (Image> Adjustments>Selective Color). In the dialog box that appears, select “neutrals” from the drop-down menu and either add magenta (to minimize green skin tones) or subtract cyan (to correct cyan skin tones). Sometimes it is a combination of green and cyan that you want to correct, so both sliders will be employed. Note that if you add color you will often add overall density to the image, so you may have to reduce the “black” slider slightly to compensate.

LEFT—Golden afternoon light and on-camera diffusion with fast film helped define this fun-to-look-at outdoor portrait. The photographer used a diffused flash to fill in the backlighting. The posing is terrific, as are the expressions. Photograph by Robert Love. **BELOW**—This portrait could very easily be a painting. The composition is superb. On-camera diffusion, fast film, and generous backlighting with minimal flash fill make this image an unforgettable family portrait. The owner, positioned just to the right of the camera, held the dog’s attention. Photograph by Robert Love.



[8]

INDOOR LIGHTING

The various complexities of lighting in the studio are not really factors when we talk about lighting groups indoors. The key is always to light the subjects evenly from left to right and from front to back. There cannot be any “holes” in the lighting, and this is particularly difficult with large groups.

It is irrelevant to talk about portrait lighting patterns here (like paramount, loop, and Rembrandt lighting). Instead, you should be concerned about getting the lights high enough to model the subjects’ faces and getting the light off to the side so that it is not a flat, frontal lighting.

But again, these aspects of the lighting are dictated by the size of the group and the area in which you must photograph them. What is important is that you create a one-light look, as you’d find in nature. Various sources of fill light will be discussed throughout, but in every instance, one should strive for a single main-light look in indoor lighting.

FEATHERING

Feathering means using the edge rather than the hot core of the light source. If you aim a light source directly at your subjects, you will find that while the

strobe’s modeling light might trick you into thinking the lighting is even, it is really falling off at the ends of the group. Feathering will help to light your group more evenly because you are aiming the light source past the subjects, using the edge of the light.



This is a dance floor at a wedding reception lit by quartz-halogen lights. You can see that there are a few “holes” in the lighting, but overall it’s very even throughout. Since most of the activities happen in the center of the room, the lights are directed there. The photographer also used some of the tungsten-balanced stage lighting (see upper right-hand corner of the frame) for supplementary lighting. Photograph by Vladimir Bekker.



LEFT—Jeffrey and Julia Woods created this handsome group portrait of the groom and groomsmen by finding a very graphic staircase and taking an eagle's eye view. What is unusual is that no flash was used and the light level was not all that high. Photographed from above with a Canon EOS 1D Mark II, and 28mm lens at ISO 640 at an exposure setting of $\frac{1}{100}$ second at f/2.8. By changing the point of focus from the groom into the second tier of the group, all of the groomsmen were rendered sharply, as well. **RIGHT**—Window light is spectacular for small groups. Here, two young girls are positioned very close to the window light source with tight cropping. No fill-in source is needed because the light virtually wraps around the curved planes of their faces. Photograph by Norman Phillips.

Feathering can be done with umbrellas or undiffused lights by aiming the light past the group so that you are only using the edge of the light. It might call for aiming the light up and over the group, using just the edge of the light to illuminate each of the subjects. However, since you are using the edge of the light, you will sometimes cause the level of light to drop off. Always check the results in the viewfinder and with a meter.

Another trick is to move the light source back so that it is less intense overall but covers a wider area. The light will be harsher and less diffused the farther you move it back.

LIGHTING THE LARGE ROOM OR DANCE FLOOR

Feathering is the technique used to light large areas like the dance floor of a wedding reception. Umbrella lights are set up on stands, which are taped securely to the floor.

The umbrellas are focused to attain maximum light output. The umbrellas are usually positioned in the corners of the room and feathered so their core of light is pointed past the center of the room and spreads evenly across it. All of the umbrellas are slaved (with either radio or optical slaves) so that when the photographer triggers his or her flash (either on-camera or off-camera flash), all of the umbrellas will fire in sync. The effect is beautiful, allowing the photographer to capture an image of anyone anywhere on the dance floor without having to set up the lighting for each shot.

Another way to light the dance floor is to use quartz-halogen lights on stands positioned throughout the room. Since these lights are tungsten-balanced, you must use tungsten-balanced film or the tungsten white-balance setting on your digital camera. These lights provide the same flexibility as strobes, perhaps even more, because

you can see the light falloff and, when shooting, you can use your in-camera meter for reliable results.

Whether you're using quartz lights or strobes in umbrellas, it is imperative to locate and secure the lights safely. Because wedding receptions are sometimes raucous affairs, people could easily trip over the stands or any wires that are not completely taped down with duct tape.

The last thing you want is for someone to be injured due to your carelessness.

FOCUSING UMBRELLAS

Umbrellas fit inside a tubular housing in most studio electronic flash units. The umbrella slides toward and away from the flash head and is anchored with a setscrew



Here's a bird's-eye view of a very large group. The high vantage point is by far one of the best ways to photograph this many people. The photographer used multiple umbrellas to light the large group. The umbrellas were first focused and then feathered to spread the light out as evenly as possible. Meter readings were taken throughout the group to ensure even exposure. Photograph by Michael Ayers.



TOP—This elegant portrait of seven was made by window light. You can see the light falloff from the girl on the far right to the girl on the far left. The photographer based his exposure on the bride, who is beautifully lit from the side. The stained-glass window at the left provided some much-needed fill light on the girls on the left of the frame. Note that the girl on the left in the top row is leaning into the light. Photograph by Kenneth Sklute. **BOTTOM**—In this image by Marcus Bell, the time of day and lighting have been altered in Photoshop—even the location was made more theatrical. Marcus darkened the image using the digital dodging and burning tools in Photoshop, then combined a duplicate sepia layer and duplicate Gaussian blur layer until the final effect was achieved. He says of this image, “It’s important for photographers to understand that capturing the image is only the first stage of many to produce a final image. I wanted to emphasize their fairytale-like dresses, so I printed the image to reflect this.” The title of the image is *Secret*.



or similar device. The reason the umbrella-to-light-source distance is adjustable is that there is a set distance at which the full amount of strobe light hits the complete surface of the umbrella. This is optimal. If the umbrella is too close to the strobe, much of the beam of light is focused past the umbrella surface and goes to waste. When setting up, use the modeling light of the strobe to focus the distance correctly, so the outer edges of the light core strike the outer edges of the umbrella for maximum light efficiency.

WINDOW LIGHT

One of the most flattering types of lighting you can use in group portraiture is window lighting. It is a soft light that minimizes facial imperfections and is also a highly directional light, yielding good roundness and modeling qualities in portraits. Window light is usually a fairly bright light, and it is infinitely variable, changing almost by the minute, allowing a great variety of moods in a single shooting session.

Window lighting has several drawbacks, as well. Since daylight falls off rapidly once it enters a window and is much weaker several feet from the window than it is close to the window, great care must be taken in determining exposure, particularly with groups of three or four people. Another problem arises from shooting in buildings not designed for photography. You will

sometimes have to work with distracting backgrounds and uncomfortably close shooting distances.

The best quality of window light is the soft, indirect light of mid-morning or mid-afternoon. Direct sunlight is difficult to work with because of its intensity and because it will often create shadows of the individual window-panes on the subject. It is often said that north light is the best for window-lit portraits. This is not necessarily true. Good-quality light can be had from a window facing any direction, provided the light is soft.

Subject Positioning. One of the most difficult aspects of shooting window-light portraits is positioning your subjects so that there is good facial modeling. If the subjects are placed parallel to the window, you will get a form of split lighting that can be harsh. It is best to position your subjects away from the window slightly so that they can look back toward the window. Thus, the lighting will highlight more area on the faces.

You can also position yourself between the window and your subjects for a flat type of lighting. Often, however, your figure will block much-needed light, or the subjects must be quite far from the window to get proper perspective and composition. Under these circumstances, the light level will often be too low to make a decent exposure, even with a fast ISO.

The closer to the window your subjects are, the harsher the lighting will be. The light becomes more diffused the farther you move from the window. Usually, it is best to position the subjects 3–5 feet from the window. This not only gives better lighting but gives you a little room to produce a flattering pose and pleasing composition.

EXPOSURE

The best way to meter for exposure is with a handheld incident meter. Hold it in front of each of the subjects' faces in the same light and take a reading, pointing the



Concerning this image entitled *It's Show Time*, photographer Tibor Imely says, "It all happened really quickly. Everyone was waiting for the bride and groom to enter the reception for the introduction. I looked behind me, and 3 feet away there were these three little girls with their arms around each other. When I aimed the camera at them they came up with these incredible expressions. I took only one shot." The image was made with a Canon 10D, 16–35mm f/2.8 EOS lens, and bounce flash.



As the wedding preparations reach a crescendo, this level of spontaneity could not have been arranged or choreographed, only captured—which is what Marcus Bell did using a very wide, very fast lens. There are three separate scenes going on in two different rooms. By necessity, the image was made by available light. Certain parts of the scene were burned-in in Photoshop to focus the viewer's eye on the most important parts of the image.

light-sensitive hemisphere directly at the lens. With more than one subject, you'll get multiple readings. Choose an exposure midway between the two or three readings.

If using a reflected meter, like the in-camera meter, move in close and take readings off the faces. If the subjects are particularly fair-skinned, remember to open up at least one f-stop from the indicated reading. Most camera light meters take an average reading, so if you move in close on a person with an average skin tone, the meter will read the face, hair, and what little clothing and background it can see and give you a fairly good exposure reading. Average these readings and choose an intermediate exposure setting.

Since you will be using the lens at or near its widest aperture, it is important to focus carefully. Focus on the eyes and, if necessary, adjust members of the group forward or backward so they fall within the same focus

plane. Depth of field is minimal at these apertures, so control the pose and focus as carefully as possible and be sure light falls evenly on all the faces.

FILL-IN ILLUMINATION

One of the problems with window light is that there is not adequate fill light to illuminate the shadow side of the faces. The easiest way to fill the shadows is with a large white or silver fill reflector placed next to the subjects on the side opposite the window. The reflector has to be angled properly to direct the light back into the faces.

If you are shooting a $\frac{3}{4}$ - or full-length portrait, a fill card may not be sufficient, and it may be necessary to provide another source of illumination to achieve a good fill-in balance. Sometimes, if you flick on a few room lights, you will get good overall fill-in. Other times, you may have to use bounce flash.

If using the room lights for fill, be sure they do not overpower the window light, creating multiple lighting patterns. If the light is direct (casts its own set of noticeable shadows), then you are better off using another type of fill-in.

When using daylight-balanced color film or a daylight white-balance setting on your digital camera, you will get a warm glow from the tungsten room lights. This is not necessarily objectionable as long as the light is diffused and not too intense.

It is a good idea to have a room light in the background behind the subjects. This opens up an otherwise dark background and provides better depth in the portrait. If possible, position the background room light behind the subject, out of view of the camera, or off to the side and out of the camera's field of view so it lights the wall behind the subjects.

If none of the above methods of fill-in is available to you, use bounce flash. You can bounce the light from a portable electronic flash off a white card or the ceiling, or into an umbrella or a far wall, but be sure that it is one-half to one full f-stop less intense than the daylight. It is important when using flash for fill-in to carry a flashmeter for determining the intensity of the flash.

DIFFUSING WINDOW LIGHT

If you find a nice location for a portrait but the light coming through the windows is direct sunlight, you can diffuse the window light with some acetate diffusing material taped to the window frame. It produces a warm golden window light. Light diffused in this manner has the feeling of warm sunlight but without the harsh shadows. If still too harsh, try doubling the thickness of the acetate for more diffusion. When used on a movie set, these diffusers are called scrims. Since the light is so scattered by the scrim, you will probably not need a fill source unless you are working with a larger group. In that case, use reflectors to bounce light back into the faces of those farthest from the window. Scrims are available commercially in a variety of sizes.

BOUNCE FLASH

Portable electronic flash is the most difficult of one-light applications. Portable flash units do not have modeling lights, so it is impossible to see the lighting effect.

However, there are certain ways to use a portable flash in a predictable way to get excellent portrait lighting for groups.

Bounce flash is an ideal type of portrait light. It is soft and directional. By bouncing the flash off the ceiling or a side wall, you can achieve an elegant wraparound-style lighting that illuminates the subjects beautifully.

If you are using side-wall bounce flash, you will probably need to position a reflector at an angle to the group to kick in some much-needed fill light.

You must learn to gauge angles when using bounce flash. Aim the flash unit at a point on the wall or ceiling that will produce the widest beam of light reflecting back onto your subjects.

You should never make color exposures when bouncing flash off colored walls. The light reflected back onto your subjects will be the same color as the walls or ceiling.

Lighting Large Groups with Bounce Flash. Michael Ayers, one of the featured photographers in this book, has several tips for lighting large groups. His recommendation is to use a white ceiling and bounce the flash off the ceiling. "This gives a much more even lighting pattern. Also, aim to have a shallow lighting ratio for larger groups, like 1:1, 1:2, or 1:2.5, but never 1:4 or higher—the light is too hard to control. The quickest way to light a large group is to always utilize the ceiling. This is a perfect reflector, or "umbrella" provided the ceiling is a shade of white. Bounce the light [from one or more studio strobes] from behind or beside the camera—many of our clients love the soft wraparound light pattern it creates for families and groups."

[Portable flash units do not have modeling lights, so it is impossible to see the lighting effect.]

The best means of determining exposure is with a flashmeter. Use it at the group position to take readings at either end of the group and in the middle. You should not have more than one- or two-tenths of a stop difference between any of the readings.

You must determine the angle of incidence (what goes up) and the angle of reflection (what comes down) in



A single umbrella blends seamlessly with the available light in the church to create a unique group portrait. The light source is high and to the side, creating beautiful high-light brilliance and facial modeling on the subjects. The light is also far enough to the side so that the grain of the wood is enhanced and the words carved in the wood are completely readable. The design of the photo is such that the little boy (presumably the one with the cocktail earlier in this book—see page 74) is just as important as the figure in the foreground and the one who is out of focus in the background. This image was part of a series of portraits created for Kodak Professional Australia. Photograph by David Anthony Williams.

you get soft, frontal lighting similar to fashion lighting. While diffused flash is still a flat lighting and is frontal in nature, its softness produces much better contouring than direct undiffused flash.

There are various diffusers on the market that can be used with on-camera flash. Most can even be

used with your flash in auto or TTL mode, making exposure calculation effortless.

order to properly set up bounce lights, particularly with studio-type strobes with minimal modeling lights. Choose the angle from the flash to the ceiling carefully, because the angle from the ceiling to the subject will be the same angle. Ayers cautions not to get the strobes too close to the group; otherwise, you will produce an overhead type of lighting. With the right angle, bounce flash will eliminate the need for retouching. Its soft, wrap-around effect is ideal for medium- to large-size groups.

With quartz lights, which are extremely bright, you will be able to see the exact effect you will get and meter it to make sure the lighting is even. With strobes, on the other hand, you must set the lights carefully. A digital camera will allow you to preview the effectiveness of your lighting instantly.

DIFFUSED “STRAIGHT” FLASH

On-camera flash should be avoided altogether for making portraits unless it is a fill-in source. Its light is too harsh and flat, and it produces no roundness or contouring of the faces. However, when you diffuse on-camera flash,

UMBRELLAS AND SOFTBOXES

Umbrellas and softboxes are ideal on-location lighting solutions for groups. A single softbox can be used for small groups to produce beautiful, in-studio-type lighting. Umbrellas can be used to light large areas for big groups.

Photographic umbrellas are either white or silver lined. Softboxes are highly diffused and may even be double diffused with the addition of a second scrim over the lighting surface. In addition, some softbox units accept multiple strobe heads for additional lighting power and intensity.

A silver-lined umbrella produces a more specular, direct light than does a matte white umbrella. When using lights of equal intensity, a silver-lined umbrella can be used as a key light because of its increased intensity and directness. It will also produce wonderful specular highlights in the overall highlight areas of the face.

"Zebra" umbrellas come with alternating white and silver panels. These produce good overall soft light but with specular highlights.

Michael Ayers says about using umbrellas,

"When I first learned lighting, all the great photographers emphasized the importance of using parabolic lighting, saying, 'If you can master parabolic lights, you can learn everything else.' They were right, and I recommend that students of photography begin their practice of forming and feathering light using parabolics first, before using umbrellas, barebulb flash, or softboxes.

"For many, umbrellas are a favorite because they are light and compact, easy to use on location, can be feathered and adjusted precisely, and allow the photographer to utilize a broad light source with little effort.

"With translucent shoot-through umbrellas, the light can be projected through the umbrella toward the subject instead of just reflecting the light off the back of the umbrella.

"An aspect of using umbrellas incorrectly is the problem of aiming the umbrella directly at the subject. Umbrellas have the ability to be feathered beautifully. The light from the edges of a correctly placed umbrella is usually the softest, whereas the light from the center often has a hotspot. Using a light meter to find the broad, smooth light along the edge of an umbrella is the best operation to perform before making any exposures."

THE MAKING OF THE ULTIMATE GROUP SHOT

The United Nations Millennium Conference, the largest gathering in the history of world leaders, brought together 189 heads of government and high-ranking officials from around the world. A top-notch photo team recruited by the Eastman Kodak Company made the ultimate group photograph. The photo, commissioned by the United Nations, appeared in major magazines and newspapers throughout the world.

The team of photographers was put together by Terry Deglau, then the manager of trade relations at Eastman Kodak. The photographers and three camera formats were

chosen for the job: Bob Golding would shoot 4x5-inch images, Tony Corbell would shoot the medium-format images on a Hasselblad, and Rick Billings, who shot with a Kodak DCS 560 digital camera, would produce photos for worldwide distribution to the news media.

Much of the success of this venture would depend on good lighting. The team used four 1000 watt-second Photogenic strobes with parabolic reflectors at the camera position. Another four Photogenic strobes were used on stands with umbrellas closer to the group, and two more strobes were used for separation lights. The lights, once set, produced an f/22 exposure with no more than 1/10-stop deviation across the entire group area.

To give each dignitary his or her own space, Deglau planned to give each person 18 inches of room, from shoulder to shoulder. Because of perspective, the shot required that there be fewer people in the front row than in the back. Deglau's calculations put nineteen dignitaries in the first row and twenty-five in the back row so that the final composition would build straight lines on the left and right.

Two scaffoldings were erected, one 16 feet off the ground, the other 11 feet. The higher of the two held the three photographers, and the shorter one was for Deglau, who was miked to address the group.

Risers were built with a 1-foot rise and, to ensure that every face would be clearly visible, every other row was moved 9 inches to the right. Paper footprints were taped onto the floor, each having the dignitary's name and country written on them. All of the dignitaries were then given pieces of paper to identify their exact location.

[The photo, commissioned by the United Nations, appeared in major magazines and newspapers throughout the world.]

How did they get the great exposure? Deglau, who was positioned in front of the three photographers, explained to the dignitaries that, "In America, photographers may count to three and make an exposure." He then said, "Let's try it!" The photographers had planned to make the exposure when the group looked good and was paying attention. It came after the count of "two." Deglau point-



UN photo by Terry Deglau, Tony Corbell, Rick Billings, and Bob Golding for Eastman Kodak Company.

ed to the photographers behind him and said to the group, “they can’t count.” The group laughed and they made a second exposure, which produced the best expressions.

If you’re thinking a shot like this couldn’t have gone that smoothly, you’re right. The dignitary in the gold robe at the far left of the first row would simply not move closer to the group. He steadfastly stayed 2 feet or more from the person next to him. Deglau, who had been instructed not to touch any of the dignitaries, went to the man’s location and tried to get him to move over, even going so far as to give him a gentle nudge. The man completely ignored Terry and looked at him as if he didn’t understand a word of English. Deglau went back to his platform and the shot proceeded. In the end, Rick Billings, who had made the digital images of the group, “moved” the

man over digitally, tucking him in behind the shoulder of the man on his left.

Only thirty minutes had been allotted to make this momentous photograph. In fact, fifteen exposures were made on the three different cameras in just twenty-three minutes. That’s the total elapsed time from the time the group arrived to the completion of the photography. The team had eight good exposures to choose from.

At the conclusion of the photography session, the presidents and dignitaries gave Deglau and the team a warm round of applause for the excellent event planning.

Several days later, 16x20-inch prints, framed and matted by Art Leather/GNP, were signed by the Secretary General of the UN and given to each of the heads of state as a gift for attending the UN conference.

[GLOSSARY]

Balance. A state of visual symmetry among elements in a photograph. *See also* Tension.

Barn doors. Black, metal folding doors that attach to a light's reflector. These are used to control the width of the beam of light.

Bounce flash. Bouncing the light of a studio or portable flash off a surface such as a ceiling or wall to produce indirect, shadowless lighting.

Box light. A diffused light source housed in a box-shaped reflector. The bottom of the box is translucent material; the side pieces of the box are opaque but are coated with a reflective material such as foil on the inside to optimize light output.

Burning-in. (1) A darkroom printing technique in which specific areas of the print surface are given additional exposure in order to darken them. (2) In Photoshop, the same effect can be achieved using the Burn tool.

Burst rate. The number of frames per second (fps) a digital camera can record and the number of frames per exposure sequence a camera can record. Typical burst rates range from 2.5fps up to six shots, all the way up to 8fps up to forty shots.

Byte. A unit of data, typically consisting of 8 bits. Computer memory and storage are referenced in bytes (1 kilobyte [KB] is equal to 1000 bytes; 1 megabyte [MB] represents 1 million bytes; and 1 gigabyte [GB] equals 1 trillion bytes).

Card reader. Card readers are used to download image files from a capture and/or storage device to your computer workstation.

Catchlight. The specular highlights that appear in the iris or pupil of the subject's eyes, reflected from the portrait lights.

CCD. Charge-coupled device. A type of image sensor that separates the spectrum of color into red, green, and blue for digital processing by the camera. A CCD captures only black & white images. The image is passed through red, green, and blue filters in order to produce color.

CC filters. Color compensating filters come in gel or glass form and are used to correct the color balance of a scene.

CMOS. Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor. A type of semiconductor that has been, until the Canon EOS D30, widely unavailable for digital cameras. CMOS chips consume less energy than chips that utilize simply one type of transistor.

Color management. A system of software-based checks and balances that ensures consistent color through a variety of capture, display, editing, and output device profiles.

Color space. An environment referring to the range of colors that a particular device is able to produce.

Color temperature. The degrees Kelvin of a light source. Also refers to a film's sensitivity. Color films are balanced for 5500°K (daylight), 3200°K (tungsten), or 3400°K (photoflood). Digital cameras feature white-balance controls, which attenuate the exposure for the color temperature of the light source.

Compression. (1) Term used to describe a perspective effect common to telephoto lenses. Items appear stacked closely together or compressed. (2) In digital imaging, a way of reducing the file size of an image by reorganizing the data contained in the file or eliminating extraneous data. *See also* JPEG, Lossless format, and Lossy Format.

Crosslighting. Lighting that comes from the side of the subject, skimming facial surfaces to reveal the maximum texture in the skin. Also called split lighting.

Cross shadows. Shadows created by lighting a group with two light sources from either side of the camera. These should be eliminated to restore the “one-light” look.

Depth of field. The distance that is sharp beyond and in front of the focus point at a given f-stop.

Depth of focus. The amount of sharpness that extends in front of and behind the focus point. The depth of focus of some lenses extends 50 percent in front of and 50 percent behind the focus point. Other lenses may vary.

Diffusion flat. Portable, translucent diffuser that can be positioned in a window frame or near the subject to diffuse the light striking the subject.

Dodging. (1) Darkroom printing technique in which specific areas of the print are given less print exposure by blocking the light to those areas of the print, making those areas lighter. (2) In Photoshop, the same effect can be achieved using the Dodge tool.

Dragging the shutter. Using a shutter speed slower than the X-sync speed in order to capture the ambient light in a scene.

E.I. (Exposure Index). The term refers to a film speed other than the rated ISO of the film.

EPS. Encapsulated PostScript file format capable of containing both high-quality vector and bitmap graphics, including flexible font capabilities. The EPS format is supported by most graphic, illustration, and page-layout software.

EXIF. Exchangeable Image Format. EXIF is a digital imaging standard for storing metadata such as camera settings and other text within image files. You can find this data in Photoshop by going to File>File Info, then selecting EXIF from the Section pull-down menu.

Feathering. Misdirecting the light deliberately so that the edge of the beam of light illuminates the subject.

Fill card. A white or silver-foil-covered card used to reflect light back into the shadow areas of the subject.

Fill light. Secondary light source used to fill in the shadows created by the key light.

FireWire. One of the fastest peripheral standards ever developed, making it ideal for use with multimedia peripherals such as digital cameras and other high-speed devices like the latest hard drives and printers.

Flash fill. Flash technique that uses electronic flash to fill in the shadows created by the key light.

Flash key. Flash technique in which the flash becomes the key light and the ambient light in the scene fills the shadows created by the flash.

Focusing an umbrella. Adjusting the length of the exposed shaft of an umbrella in a light housing to optimize light output.

Foreshortening. A distortion of normal perspective caused by close proximity of the camera/lens to the subject. Foreshortening exaggerates subject features—noses appear elongated, chins jut out, and the backs of heads may appear smaller than normal.

45-degree lighting. Portrait lighting pattern characterized by a triangular highlight on the shadow side of the face. Also known as Rembrandt lighting.

Full-length portrait. A pose that includes the full figure of the model. Full-length portraits can show the subject standing, seated, or reclining.

Gamut. Fixed range of color values reproducible on a display (e.g., monitor) or output (e.g., printer) device. Gamut is determined by color gamut, which refers to the actual range of colors, and the dynamic range, which refers to the brightness values.

Gaussian blur. Photoshop filter that diffuses a digital image.

Gobo. Light-blocking card that is supported on a stand or boom and positioned between the light source and subject to selectively block light from portions of the scene.

Golden mean. A rule of composition that gives a guideline for the most dynamic area in which to place the subject. Determined by drawing a diagonal line from one corner of the frame to the other, then drawing a line from either remaining corner of the frame so that the diagonal is intersected perpendicularly.

Grayscale. Color model consisting of up to 254 shades of gray plus absolute black and absolute white. Every pixel of a grayscale image displays as a brightness value ranging from 0 (black) to 255 (white). The exact range of grays represented in a grayscale image can vary.

Groundglass. The camera’s focusing screen on which the image is focused.

Head-and-shoulder axis. Imaginary lines running through shoulders (shoulder axis) and down the ridge of the nose (head axis). Head-and-shoulder axes should never be perpendicular to the line of the lens axis.

High-key lighting. Type of lighting characterized by a low lighting ratio and a predominance of light tones.

Highlight brilliance. Refers to the specularity of highlights on the skin. A negative with good highlight brilliance shows specular highlights (paper-base white) within a major highlight area. Achieved through good lighting and exposure techniques.

Histogram. A graph associated with a single image file that indicates the number of pixels that exist for each brightness level. The range of the histogram represents 0 to 255 from left to right, with 0 indicating absolute black and 255 indicating absolute white.

ICC Profile. File that contains device-specific information that describes how the device behaves toward color density and color gamut. Since all devices communicate differently, as far as color is concerned, profiles enable the color management system to convert device-dependent colors into or out of each specific color space based on the profile for each component in the workflow. ICC profiles can utilize a device-independent color space to act as a translator between two or more different devices.

Incident light meter. A handheld light meter that measures the amount of light falling on its light-sensitive dome.

JPEG. Joint Photographic Experts Group. JPEG is an image file format with various compression levels. The higher the compression rate, the lower the image quality when the file is expanded (restored). Although there is a form of JPEG that employs lossless compression, the most commonly used forms of JPEG employ lossy compression algorithms, which discard varying amounts of the original image data in order to reduce file size for storage.

Key light. The main light in portraiture used to establish the lighting pattern and define the facial features of the subject.

Kicker. A backlight (a light coming from behind the subject) that highlights the hair or contour of the body.

Lead-in line. In compositions, a pleasing line in the scene that leads the viewer's eye toward the main subject.

Lens circle. The circle of coverage; the area of focused light rays falling on the film plane or digital imaging chip.

Levels. In Photoshop, Levels allows you to correct the tonal range and color balance of an image. In the Levels window, Input refers to the original intensity values of the

pixels in an image and Output refers to the revised color values based on your adjustments.

Lighting ratio. The difference in intensity between the highlight side of the face and the shadow side of the face. A 3:1 ratio implies that the highlight side is three times brighter than the shadow side of the face.

Loop lighting. A portrait lighting pattern characterized by a loop-like shadow on the shadow side of the subject's face. Differs from paramount or butterfly lighting because the key light is placed slightly lower and farther to the side of the subject.

Lossless format. Describes the compression strategy of various file formats. A lossless format does not lose any data, meaning that the file can be saved again and again without degradation.

Lossy format. Describes the compression strategy of various file formats. Lossy compression results in the loss of image data every time the image is saved.

Low-key lighting. Type of lighting characterized by a high lighting ratio and strong scene contrast as well as a predominance of dark tones.

Main light. Synonymous with key light.

Matte box. A front-lens accessory with retractable bellows that holds filters, masks, and vignettors for modifying the image.

Metadata. Text "tags" that accompany the digital files. Data often includes date, time, camera settings, caption info, copyright symbol (©), and even GPS information. Metadata is accessible in Photoshop; just go to File>File Info, and from the Section pull-down menu, select EXIF.

Microdrive. Storage medium for portable electronic devices using the CF Type II industry standard. Current microdrive capacities range from 340MB to 1GB of storage. The benefit of a microdrive is high storage capacity at low cost. The downside is the susceptibility to shock—bumping or dropping a microdrive can lead to data loss.

Modeling light. A secondary light mounted in the center of a studio flash head that gives a close approximation of the lighting that the flash tube will produce. Usually high intensity, low-heat output quartz bulbs.

Noise. (1) Noise is a condition, not unlike excessive grain, that happens when stray electronic information affects the image sensor sites. It is made worse by heat and long exposures. Noise shows up more in dark areas, making evening and night photography problematic with dig-

ital capture. (2) In order to produce a grainy appearance in digital images, the Noise filter in Photoshop is sometimes used for creative effect.

Optimum lens aperture. The aperture on a lens that produces the sharpest image. It is usually two stops down from the widest aperture. If the lens is an f/2.8 lens, for example, the optimum aperture would be f/5.6.

Parabolic reflector. Oval dish that houses a light and directs its beam outward in an even, controlled manner.

Paramount lighting. One of the basic portrait lighting patterns, characterized by a high-key light placed directly in line with the line of the subject's nose. This lighting produces a butterfly-like shadow under the nose. Also called butterfly lighting.

Perspective. The appearance of objects in a scene as determined by their relative distance and position.

Pixel. Picture element. Smallest element used to form an image on a screen or paper. Thousands of pixels are used to display an image on a computer screen or print an image from a printer.

Point light source. A light source, like the sun, which produces sharp-edged shadows without diffusion.

PSD. Photoshop file format (PSD) is the default file format and the only format that supports all Photoshop features. The PSD format saves all image layers created within the file.

RAW file. A file format that uses lossless compression algorithms to record picture data as is from the sensor, without applying any in-camera corrections. In order to use images recorded in the RAW format, files must first be processed by compatible software. RAW processing includes the option to adjust exposure, white balance, and the color of the image, all the while leaving the original RAW picture data unchanged.

Reflector. (1) Same as fill card. (2) A housing on a light that reflects the light outward in a controlled beam.

Rembrandt lighting. Same as 45-degree lighting.

RGB. Red, Green, and Blue. Computers and other digital devices handle color information as shades of red, green, and blue. A 24-bit digital camera, for example, will have 8 bits per channel in red, green, and blue, resulting in 256 shades of color per channel.

Rim lighting. Portrait lighting pattern where the key light is behind the subject and illuminates the edge of the subject. Most often used with profile poses.

Rule of thirds. Format for composition that divides the image area into thirds, horizontally and vertically. The intersection of two lines is a dynamic point where the subject should be placed for the most visual impact.

$\frac{7}{8}$ view. Facial pose that shows approximately $\frac{7}{8}$ of the face. Almost a full-face view as seen from the camera.

Scrim. A panel used to diffuse sunlight. Scrims can be set in windows, used on stands, or suspended in front of a light source to diffuse the light.

Sharpening. In Photoshop, filters that increase apparent sharpness by increasing the contrast of adjacent pixels within an image.

Short lighting. One of two basic types of portrait lighting in which the key light illuminates the side of the face turned away from the camera.

Shutter lag time. This is the length of time between when you press the shutter release and when the camera actually fires. Shutter lag time will directly affect the camera's burst rate. Rates of shutter release delay time are usually given in milliseconds (ms). An average shutter lag time for a professional DSLR would be in the area of 90ms.

Slave. A remote-triggering device used to fire auxiliary flash units. These may be optical or radio-controlled.

Softbox. Same as a box light. Can contain one or more light heads and single or double-diffused scrims.

Soft-focus lens. Special lens that uses spherical or chromatic aberration in its design to diffuse the image points.

Specular highlights. Sharp, dense image points on the negative. Specular highlights are very small and usually appear on pores in the skin. Specular highlights are pure white with no detail.

Split lighting. Type of portrait lighting that splits the face into two distinct areas: shadow side and highlight side. The key light is placed far to the side of the subject and slightly higher than the subject's head height. Also called cross lighting.

sRGB. Color matching standard jointly developed by Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard. Cameras, monitors, applications, and printers that comply with this standard are able to reproduce colors the same way. Also known as a color space designated for digital cameras.

Straight flash. The light of an on-camera flash unit that is used without diffusion; i.e., straight.

Subtractive fill-in. Lighting technique that uses a black card to subtract light from a subject area in order to create a better-defined lighting ratio. Also refers to the placement of a black card over the subject in outdoor portraiture to make the light more frontal and less overhead in nature.

Swings and tilts. View-camera movements of the lens and film stages. Used to correct perspective and control the plane of focus.

TTL-balanced fill flash. Flash exposure systems that read the flash exposure through the camera lens and adjust flash output to compensate for flash and ambient light exposures, producing a balanced exposure.

Tension. A state of visual imbalance within a photograph. *See also* Balance.

$\frac{3}{4}$ -length pose. Pose that includes all but the lower portion of the subject's anatomy. Can be from above the knees and up, or below knees and up.

$\frac{3}{4}$ view. Facial pose that allows the camera to see $\frac{3}{4}$ of the facial area. The subject's face is usually turned 45 degrees away from the lens so that the far ear disappears from camera view.

TIFF (Tagged Image File Format). File format commonly used for image files. There are two kinds of TIFF files. The most popular TIFF file is the uncompressed type, meaning that no matter how many times a particular file is opened and closed, the data remains the same. There is also version of the TIFF format that uses LZW compression, a lossless compression algorithm. However, it is not universally supported. All of the images that appear in this book were reproduced from uncompressed TIFF files.

Tooth. Refers to a negative that has a built-in retouching surface that will accept retouching leads.

Umbrella lighting. Type of soft, casual lighting that uses one or more photographic umbrellas to diffuse the light source(s).

Unsharp Mask filter. A sharpening tool in Adobe Photoshop that locates pixels that differ from surrounding pixels and increases the pixels' contrast by amounts

you specify. It is usually the last step in preparing an image for printing.

USB/USB 2.0. USB (Universal Serial Bus) is an external bus standard that supports data transfer rates of 12MB per second. USB is particularly well suited for high-speed downloading of images from digital cameras straight to your computer. USB 2.0 transfers data at a much greater rate than USB—up to 480MB per second in a dedicated USB 2.0 port.

Vignette. A semicircular, soft-edged border around the main subject. Vignettes can be either light or dark in tone and can be included at the time of shooting, in printing, or produced with an image-editing program like Photoshop.

Watt-seconds. Numerical system used to rate the power output of electronic flash units. Primarily used to rate studio strobe systems.

White balance. The digital camera's ability to correct color and tint when shooting under different lighting conditions including daylight, indoor, and fluorescent lighting.

Working color space. Predefined color management settings specifying the color profiles to be associated with the RGB, CMYK, and Grayscale color modes. The settings also specify the color profile for spot colors in a document. Central to the color management workflow, these profiles are known as working spaces. The working spaces specified by predefined settings represent the color profiles that will produce the best color fidelity for several common output conditions.

Wraparound lighting. Soft type of light, produced by umbrellas, that wraps around the subject, producing a low lighting ratio and open, well-illuminated highlight areas.

X sync. The shutter speed at which focal-plane shutters synchronize with electronic flash.

Zebra. A term used to describe photographic umbrellas having alternating reflecting materials such as silver and white cloth.

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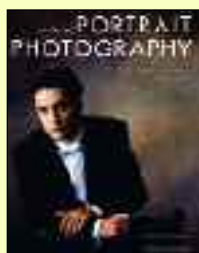
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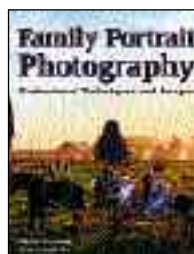


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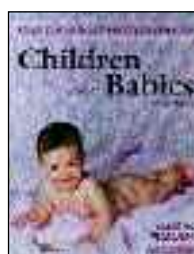
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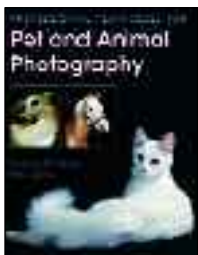
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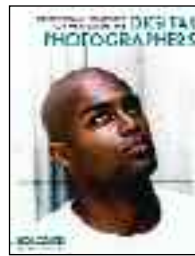
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